

INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

Junior Sunday School Course

VILLAGE SERIES—YEAR ONE

Mrs. E. A. ANNETT



PUBLISHED BY THE
INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, COONOR
NILGIRIS

1928

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VILLAGE SERIES—YEAR ONE

BY

Mrs. E. A. ANNETT

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PREFACE

THIS course of one hundred and four lessons is planned in view of the fact that there are in most of our village Sunday Schools children of Junior age, that is eight to twelve years old. These children are probably not able to take a normal Junior Course of lessons, yet their spiritual and moral nature demands something more than the lessons planned for Primary Scholars. Four years seems to be the average length of school life of most of these children, so that a two year Primary Course followed by this two year Junior Course would suffice in most village Sunday Schools. In many cases, however, it is impossible to hold Sunday School every Sunday in the year, and the course can then be adapted by spreading it over three years, or by making selections of stories sufficient for the needs of two years.

Each book begins with a Christmas Lesson and lessons from the Gospels continue up to Easter. But some adjustment will be necessary here to accord with the changing date of Easter, and it may sometimes be possible to transfer one or two lessons from one year to the other to make them fit. The first year will be found to close with lessons leading up to Christmas, and last of all some of our Lord's parables are given as the climax and conclusion of the two year's teaching.

It will be noticed that in every lesson it is suggested that some verses be read in class. It is very desirable that the children learn to find their way about in the Bible and read it for themselves, but it is unlikely that they will all possess their own Bibles. They should be encouraged to do so as far as possible, and when they have them they should always be brought to school and used there. But in cases where few,

if any, have Bibles, one child each Sunday may be appointed to read the selected portions from the teacher's Bible. These should be practised beforehand with the teacher so that the reading may be well done. Never read the lesson passage straight through at the beginning of school—this is a sure means of killing interest in the lesson which follows—but only read the selected verses at the places indicated.

Aim of the Course

1. To help a boy or girl towards a fuller idea of the character of God, as expressed in ways of truth, justice and mercy.

2. To help them towards a true ideal of duty to God and man, expressed in love, honour, obedience, fair-play and self-control, through stories of heroes whose acts and motives bear some relation to the experience of a boy or girl.

3. To present the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ :—

(a) That a boy or girl may see in His Person and deeds the highest embodiment, not of power alone, but of truth, courage, justice, love and grace.

(b) That they may feel the supreme attraction of His Person and call, and desire to love and obey Him.

SYLLABUS

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THE LIFE OF JESUS

Aim. *By a course of lessons extending from Christmas to Easter to emphasize the love and kindness of Jesus.*

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Aim. *To present the stories of the men of old in just the same way as they were told to Jewish children ; viz., as illustrating courage and faith in God that inspired men to attempt great things in His name.*

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| 47. | How the Walls were Built, Neh. iii ; iv. 1-16 ; vi ... |
| 45. | Reading the Law to the People, Neh. viii |

SOME OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES

Aim. *To conclude the course by summing up the teaching given therein with some of our Lord's most striking parables.*

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|-----|---|
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| 50. | The Good Samaritan, Luke x. 25-37 |
| 51. | The Great Invitation, Luke xiv. 15-24 |
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THE LIFE OF JESUS

Aim

By a course of lessons extending from Christmas to Easter to emphasize especially the love and kindness of Jesus.

LESSON 1

THE WISE MEN AND THEIR STAR

Matt. ii. 1-12.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The story is of the first Gentiles who came to worship Jesus. Consider how they knew of Him. We read at the end of the books of Kings and Chronicles how Jerusalem was destroyed and the people carried away into captivity. They were taken to Mesopotamia, and although seventy years later many returned, others did not but stayed in that land. They had with them their religious teachers and copies of their Scriptures, and from these some people of those lands heard of their expectation of a Messiah. The Wise Men must have been amongst those who thus heard, and they were evidently religious men who took a real interest in such things. Look up Old Testament references which would be familiar to them—Micah v. 2 was evidently not amongst them.

A great deal of confusion exists regarding the order of events here, due largely to misconceptions derived from pictures. The Wise Men did not come till long after the shepherds—the family were by that time living in a house and no longer in the stable (ii. 11). Two years was the age

SKETCH MAP OF SAMARIA AND JUDAH



Roads - - - - -
 Railway

limit set by Herod (ii. 16), so the child may have been at least a year old by that time. Circumcision, accompanied by the naming of the child, was performed on the eighth day after birth, Gen. xvii. 12, and the presentation at the Temple on the fortieth day, Lev. xii. 1-8. These must have taken place before the visit of the Wise Men and the flight into Egypt.

Consider how these men were led by the star—it probably did not look different from other stars as no one in Jerusalem had noticed it, and only those familiar with the heavens recognized it as new. If it appeared each evening in the western sky after sunset it would indicate to them that that was the direction in which to search. We have no prophecy in the Old Testament about such a star and do not know why these men should connect it with the Messiah—it may have been merely a superstition on their part—but in any case it is an indication to us of God's readiness to guide those who seek His guidance, though He may have a different means of leading each one of us. The gifts they brought were such as might be offered to a king, and represented the country's best produce. They indicate also the wealth of the givers.

Aim of this Lesson

To emphasize the joy of giving.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Talk about the stars and let the children tell what they know about them. What do they think they are? Do they know the names of any particular ones? Some people know the names of ever so many.

Watching the Stars—Once, in a country far from here, there were some very learned men who knew a great deal about the stars. Night after night had they watched the stars—they knew what time of night and which part of the year different stars would appear and many of the stars they could name. A very old tradition says that it was three of these men who, as they watched the sky one night, saw a new star. Do you think you would know if a new star appeared in the sky to-night? At once these men said to each other, "What does it mean?" They believed that a new star in the sky

indicated some great event happening on earth. Then they remembered something they had read in an old, old book. It was a copy of our Old Testament, and the people who read that book understood that it said Someone was coming to be a help and blessing to men. Can the children tell Who this would be? But these great and learned men did not know that—they lived so long ago. But they at once said, "This star must mean that that Someone has now been born." Imagine their excitement—think how they talked to each other about it—to their friends—to their families. And then came their determination to go and see the Baby King for themselves. But where was He? Perhaps the children in the class can tell where He was, but these men only knew that they had seen the star in the western sky. So to the west they determined to travel.

Seeking the King—Imagine what preparations they would make for the journey. (Let the children suggest.) They were rich men so would have many servants—tents—boxes of clothes and food. They would have to travel on camels. And as they were going to a King they must take presents—very costly ones. Picture their farewells and the start. Imagine scenes on the way—camping out in lonely places to rest—looking for the star each night. It would take them several months to go from their country to where the Baby King was. Graphically describe their arrival at Jerusalem and their experiences there, and imagine their disappointment at finding no Baby King in the palace as they had expected. Picture the fresh start from there—after sunset very likely as soon as the star appeared. Each evening it had been seen in the western sky, just a little lower each time, and now, as they approached Bethlehem, only six miles further, the star was perhaps just setting and seemed to be sinking behind one particular house—thus it "stood over where the young Child was."

Worshipping the Baby—Imagine them next morning preparing to visit the Baby King. He was no longer in the stable where the shepherds had seen Him some months before, but these rich men must have been surprised to find how small a house He was in! Describe their worship and offerings. How interested Joseph and Mary were about the

star—and how interested the visitors were to hear about the shepherds and angels. They learnt the Baby's name too, and what it meant—do the children remember? Repeat together i. 21. Perhaps it was for a week that they stayed in Bethlehem seeing the Baby each day—think what they would do.

The Other Way Home—Then tell of their dream. Picture their experiences on the return journey and their arrival at home. Think how they told of the Baby to all their friends. So right at the beginning of His life news of Jesus was carried to other lands.

How good it would be if we could do just as those Wise Men did and take presents like that to Jesus—but of course we cannot see Him now. But is there some other baby to whom we can give something for His sake? Link up the story with the children's offerings and use their gifts to help some needy child.

LESSON 2

MEETING THE ENEMY

Matt. iii. 13–iv. 11.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Consider the two aspects of temptation—(a) the enticement to evil; (b) the testing of the soul. Study in this connection Eph. vi. 10, 11, our equipment for meeting temptation; Heb. ii. 17, 18, our example, and help in temptation; Jas. i. 2, 12, the result of our overcoming temptation. In considering the temptation of our Lord compare the first temptation with Gen. iii. 1. The suggestion here was to doubt God's word, to test in place of trust. The second again suggests doubt of God though apparently exhibiting great trust—'if' etc. The third suggests compromise with evil as a means of gaining what He had come to earth to win. The point of all three was the suggestion of an easier way, a short

cut for the obtaining of His object. And this was the climax of a long period of conflict with the evil one (iv. 2). Note in each case He met the temptation as a man and used no weapon that is not available for others, answering the tempter each time with quotations from the Bible. See on the map the wild barren country between Jerusalem and Jordan where the temptation probably took place, and note the added detail in Mark i. 13.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the nature of Temptation and how to overcome it.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall the name of the Baby King and its meaning. If they have previously had any stories of the boyhood of Jesus let them recall any of these details. If they have not merely tell them that He grew up to be a general favourite in His village and then became the village carpenter till He was 30 years old. Do they know someone just that age?

Listening to the Preacher—When He was just about 30 there was talk all over the country of a new preacher who did not go to the big towns to preach but stayed in a lonely and deserted place by the river, and there great crowds of people went to hear him. Now the preacher happened to be Jesus' cousin, and Jesus went with other people from His village to hear him. Tell what happened when Jesus joined the crowds with the preacher (iii. 13-17) and quote John the Baptist's words, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. 29).

The Forty Days—Directly after that Jesus left the crowds by the river and went away into a very lonely place. Before beginning to preach Jesus was determined to get a decisive victory over Satan, and Satan was also determined to make a greater effort than ever to defeat Jesus. All those years in His village home in Nazareth Jesus had been tempted by Satan who tried to make Him do wrong things just as we are tempted to do, but Jesus never listened to him once. Refer

again to the meaning of the name Jesus (ii. i. 21) and show that if Jesus was to do this He must first of all defeat him who tempted people to sin. So, led by the Spirit of God, He went into a wild, lonely, desolate wilderness where the people believed that evil spirits lived. Describe the place vividly that the children may feel the dreariness of it. And there very soon Satan met Him. We do not know whether he came visibly, or whether he suggested his evil thoughts to Jesus just as he does to us, without our seeing him, but for forty days he never left Jesus alone once. Help the children to realize something of what those days meant to Him—without food or companionship or rest—alone with the evil one who sought by every means in his power to get the victory over the Sinless One. But never once did he succeed.

The First Temptation—At the end of that time Satan made a last great effort to win the victory. Imagine how tired Jesus must have been—Satan saw in this his opportunity. Read what he said, iv. 3. Would it be wrong for Jesus to do this? He was hungry and it is right to eat and He had the power to do as Satan said, but He had determined never to use that power just to please Himself and never to do anything suggested by Satan, so, in spite of His hunger, He refused. Read what He said, iv. 4.

The Second Temptation—Now Satan apparently made Jesus see a sort of vision. The thought that came to Him was about the big Temple at Jerusalem and the crowds of people there on a feast day. Then He saw Himself standing up on the roof of the Temple and suddenly throwing Himself down on to the ground. What would happen to anyone who did that? But Satan suggested that Jesus need not fear the consequences—read what he said, iv. 6. What a nice easy way that would be of attracting the attention of all the people! They would listen to anything He said if they had seen Him do a thing like that—and it would show them something of the power of God too. That is what Satan said to Him—read His reply, iv. 7. Explain the meaning of 'tempt' here—if God had told Him to do this, or if it was necessary that He should do so, He could ask God for protection, but not if He was only doing it to show off.

The Third Temptation—Again Satan made Him see a

sort of vision, this time of all the world and all the people in it. It was because He loved all these people that Jesus had come to earth and Satan reminded Him of this. Read what Satan said, iv. 9. Could Satan do this? At least he hoped Jesus would think he could. And if all were given to Jesus how good it would be—think what changes could be made! But read Jesus' reply, iv. 10. Show the children the full import of this—He refused even to discuss the suggestion and told Satan to leave Him alone and go. Read Jas. iv. 7, and illustrate if possible from the experience of someone known to you. Very briefly describe the final scene (iv. 11). It was only when He had fought and conquered alone that angels came and strengthened Him—can we expect the same help? Read Heb. ii. 18, and show how much better this is.

Shall we learn that verse by memory? Heb. ii. 18—then we can repeat it whenever we are tempted to do wrong.

LESSON 3

MAKING FRIENDS

Mark i. 16-20; ii. 13-17

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“A short survey of St. Mark will show that the contents of chapters i. to ix. inclusive may be simply summarised as a series of six visits to Capernaum, with tours and returns . . .

“Teachers will notice that the ‘call’ of the first disciples was gradual:

(a) John i.—Five followed the new Rabbi as learners.

(b) Matt. iv. and Mark i.—After the return to Galilee from Jerusalem a more definite word is used describing the call to a new office—‘fishers of men.’

(c) Luke v.—The wonderful draught of fishes revealed further power and purpose in the call.

“It is probable that from time to time during the ministry of our Lord the disciples returned to their fishing (see John xxi). But gradually their time became more and more absorbed in the frequent and longer journeys with their

Master, till in the end they realized the full significance of the following." (Huntley.)

"The call of a publican was a challenge to the Pharisaic party. Considering the low estimation in which publicans were held it was an act of extraordinary boldness, and, if human success was aimed at, a most unwise one. But Jesus had a mission to the despised and out-cast, whom He regarded as in many respects nearer the Kingdom of God than the respectable Pharisees. The most obvious way to win their confidence and to acquire influence over them, was to call one of their number to the apostolate. He did so, and followed up the step by holding a great feast, at which He and His disciples publicly ate and drank with publicans and sinners. The incident has a double significance. (1) It is a protest by Jesus against the practice of social ostracism. If publicans are treated as if they were thieves, they are likely to become so But if men are treated with respect, they are thereby taught to respect themselves, and to try to deserve the good opinion of others. (2) It is an intimation that the Church has a mission to the poor, the out-cast and the criminal, as well as to the respectable classes Custom or toll was a tax levied on goods imported or exported from one district to another, as distinguished from tribute, an annual tax on houses, lands and persons. As custom generally went to the native government, Levi was probably in the pay of Herod Antipas, not of the Romans St. Luke says that Matthew 'left all' and followed Jesus. Probably he had been a disciple for some time and expected the call. From St. Matthew and St. Mark it might be supposed that the meal took place in the house of Jesus, that is of Peter; but it is clear from St. Luke that it was in the house of Matthew who made a great feast for his Master. This feast is not to be regarded as a mere farewell banquet given by him to his old associates, but as part of a definite design on the part of Jesus to reach the despised and out-cast classes The Pharisees were not invited, but they walked in to see what was happening" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To show that anybody may become a disciple of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—On a map drawn on the blackboard show the Lake of Galilee and Capernaum. Let the children suggest what would be the chief trade in a city situated like that on the sea shore. Tell of the quantities of fish that lived in that water.

Simon and Andrew—One evening Jesus was walking on the shore at Capernaum. Many fishermen were there getting ready for their next night's work of fishing on the lake. Picture the scene vividly. Some of these men Jesus already knew—perhaps they had heard Him preach, certainly they had talked with Him. Tell of the two brothers who were fishing in the shallow water with a hand net. They had met Jesus several times before and now gave a friendly greeting and talked for awhile. Read what Jesus then said, i. 17, and describe their response (i. 18).

James and John—A little further along the shore were two more brothers who were partners with Simon and Andrew in their fishing business. Describe what they were doing (i. 19). Very likely the three men walking towards them on the shore were talking about them. Maybe Peter said to Jesus, 'They want to follow You too.' Tell what Jesus did and how they responded (i. 20).

Levi—At the same time there was living in Capernaum a tax-gatherer named Levi. Explain his work by what you or the children have seen of the way octroi dues are collected in your district. Like everybody else in Capernaum in those days he had heard of Jesus—saw Him pass in and out of the city gate—heard Him preaching perhaps. Think how news may have come to him that Jesus was calling disciples to follow Him and imagine how Levi may have wished he could be one of them. And then one day the chance came. Vividly picture the scene—Jesus approaching Levi's office—not hurrying by—looking at him—speaking. Tell what He said (ii. 14) and picture Levi's quick response.

Matthew's Feast—At once Levi thought of something he could do to show his joy. Explain that these tax-gatherers were despised by everyone else and they were very often bad men and only associated with other bad

people. Levi thought if Jesus wanted people like him, then he would make it possible for Jesus to meet them and talk with them. Tell what he did (Luke v. 29) and vividly picture the scene as Jesus sat down with this company of despised out-cast people. Perhaps some among them were just like Levi himself had been, longing to be better men—they were rich but unhappy because of their guilty consciences. Some perhaps were quite careless about such things but Levi wanted them to meet his new Friend so invited them too. Who do you think was most happy at that feast—Jesus or Levi or the other people? Now let the children open their Bibles at and read Matthew ix. 9. Note the different name and explain that it was the same man but perhaps his name was changed when everything else was changed for him. Also point out that Matthew wrote the first Gospel—that also was the same man, Levi, who used to be a tax-gatherer. After he had been Jesus' follower for a number of years he was the first one to write down the story of Jesus' life. Read also his own account of his feast, Matthew ix. 10, and note that he was too humble to say who gave the feast—it is Luke who tells us that.

Do you think all the people in your village know that Jesus wants to be friends with all kinds of people, the bad as well as the good? To how many people can we tell this story this week?

LESSON 4

A BUSY SABBATH

Mark i. 21-34

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Note how in this chapter the chief lines of Christ's campaign are indicated.

(a) He made use of the established synagogue system, but rejected the authority of the 'scribes' to interpret Scripture.

(b) His authority in teaching was confirmed by authority in deed.

(c) At once He came into conflict with evil spirits, but refused their witness.

(d) He healed diseases.

(e) Prayer was the means of renewal of His power.

"In this Gospel, where so many miracles are recorded, note the supreme importance conceded to the preaching of our Lord" (Huntley).

In the case of Peter's mother-in-law "Mark gives details of this cure, which, no doubt, came from Peter—such as his joint ownership of the house with his brother, the names of the companions of Jesus, and the infinitely tender action of taking the sick woman by the hand and helping her to rise. But Luke, the physician, is more precise in his description of the case: 'holden by a great fever.' He traces the cure to the word of rebuke, which, no doubt, accompanied the clasp of the hand Luke is especially struck with one feature in the case—the immediate return of ordinary strength. The woman is lying, the one minute, pinned down and helpless with 'great fever,' and the next is bustling about her domestic duties. No wonder that a physician should think so abnormal a case worthy of note" (Maclaren).

"Let us not fail to notice that the 'word' of Jesus had 'power' as well as 'authority'. The demons 'came out'; the fever 'left' the patient so completely that the weakness we always expect in such cases did not follow at all, for 'she arose and ministered unto them'; and as for the great crowd of sick at sunset, they were healed 'every one'—no sickness that night in Capernaum! It was a memorable day indeed in many lives" (Stock). Being the Sabbath day it had been impossible to bring the sick for healing till after sunset.

Aim of this Lesson

To show how kind Jesus was.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Do the children remember the name of the place we heard about last week where the fishermen lived?

(Capernaum.) Point out again on the map. Now we are to have a story of something else that happened there. It was on a Sabbath day which was the Jews' worship day.

In the Church—Picture the Sabbath morning: boats idle on the beach; fishermen in best long coats kept only for Sabbath; tax-gatherers' offices closed; even Roman soldiers, though they might scoff a little, would not try to buy or sell that day. High above fishermen's houses the big white Synagogue where the people went to worship God and to hear more about Him. Rich and poor hastening through the streets, rabbis in long coats with fringes, etc. In synagogue, big boys with fathers, younger children with mothers among the women. Children a little weary during long prayers, interested to watch long roll of the Law unfolded, to hear parts being read which they had learnt at school; then the sermon. When minister stood up every eye turned to see; would it be the ordinary rabbi or a teacher from Jerusalem, or a stranger. Some whispered that this was a new Rabbi called Jesus who had done wonderful things in Jerusalem. How the boys leant forward to see! But they leant forward more when He began to speak. It was like One who told of things he had seen. How long was the sermon? We do not know, but we are sure the boys listened and wanted more. May be for the very first time God seemed very near to some boy or girl, and very real and holy to some man or woman. Then there was an interruption, a harsh and awful cry. Vividly describe (i. 23, 24). Everyone knew the poor madman and all feared when the evil spirit came upon him. But Jesus commanded now (i. 25, 26). Imagine the buzz of voices as the meeting broke up, little groups talking in streets, country-folk hastening home to tell friends, talk round the tables as people sat at the festive Sabbath meals.

In the Home—But in one home there was no festive meal and that was the home Jesus went to after the service, Peter's home. Tell who was ill and imagine their anxiety. They did not want to worry Jesus with this at first, but soon they had to tell Him. Vividly describe His actions then (i. 31), and picture the immediate result. Think of the joyous meal that followed. How would the story spread?

In the Street—By sunset time all the city was talking about these wonders, and now, their Sabbath being over, they might begin to work and carry burdens. Soon somebody arrived at Peter's house carrying something—then another—and another. They were bringing sick people to be healed. Imagine such a thing happening in your town—all the sick or blind or lame people being brought to one house as it was getting dark. And Jesus went and spoke to each one—found out what was the matter, then healed them. Think how long it would take and how tired He must have been. But every sick person went home well that night.

How good if we had someone as kind as that in our village! Cannot we all try to be kind like that?

LESSON 5

ROUND ABOUT CAPERNAUM

Mark i. 35-45

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Consider why Jesus needed to pray. He Himself once spoke of the tremendous spiritual demands made in the freeing of the demon-possessed. He also witnessed the outgoing of 'virtue' in a single act of healing. He received in prayer the renewal of power. Consider this in the light of our own practice. We pray before a task. Have we felt the need to pray *after* output? May prayer be the foil to reaction at such times?" (Huntley).

"What moved Him to leave Capernaum so soon? He had just begun His ministry there, and, to all outward appearance, the tide of success was flowing strong. . . . It was because He had a just appreciation of the situation and rated the multitude's enthusiasm at its proper value. They were seeking Him not that they might hear His message of salvation but that they might see His miracles, eager for the healing of their bodies, unconcerned about the sickness of their souls. . . .

In the course of that mission through Galilee He prosecuted an active ministry, and His fame travelled far. . . . It was a wondrous time, yet the Evangelists, perhaps since their interest centred in Capernaum, have preserved only a single incident, one drop of the plenteous rain which fell on Galilee during that season of her merciful visitation. It happened in one of the cities of Galilee. Jesus was apparently within doors when He was visited by a miserable creature, 'a man full of leprosy' (To the Jew) the leper was an out-cast. He had to rend his garments, go bareheaded, wear a covering over his mouth, and cry : 'Unclean ! Unclean !' It was one of these hapless creatures that visited Jesus in that city of Galilee. Regardless of legal restrictions, he entered the city and made his way unimpeded : all stood aside, none would lay hands on him. Reaching the house where Jesus was, he burst in, knelt before Him, flung Himself on his face, and cried : 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cleanse me.' He had no hope in man, but he had hope in the Divine Physician. Had Jesus been a Rabbi, He would have recoiled in disgust and indignation. . . . But Jesus treated this poor suppliant after another fashion. A great compassion filled His heart at the sight of him and He stretched out His hand and laid it on the wretch. 'I will,' He said ; 'be cleansed.' And instantly the rotting flesh became sound and sweet.

"It was a perilous thing that He had done. Not only had He contracted ceremonial pollution, but He had trespassed upon the province of the priest, with whom it lay to pronounce a leper clean. Should it be noised abroad it would confirm the suspicion that He made light of the Law and its ordinances, and give the rulers a specious pretext for accusing Him and impeding Him in the prosecution of His ministry. Since, however, the incident had happened within doors, it might be kept secret. . . . 'See ! say nothing to any one' He commanded ; 'but go thy way show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing what Moses prescribed, for a testimony unto them.' . . . Unhappily His importunities were disregarded. No sooner was the man out of doors than he published broadcast the story of his healing. It may be that he was actuated by gratitude and deemed it unmeet to hold his peace, reasoning within Himself that he owed it to Jesus to make

His goodness known, and forgetting that he could render to his Benefactor no better tribute than obedience. His self-willed course was a grievous error. It issued in the very consequence which Jesus had foreseen. The tidings spread, and great was the excitement. Large crowds assembled to gaze at the wonder-worker, nor did He escape when He quitted that city. The tidings had travelled far and wide, and, wherever He went He was beset. 'He could no longer openly enter into a city' (David Smith).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the fearlessness of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Last week we heard how Jesus spent one Sabbath day in Capernaum. Very likely He spent many just in that way—think how tired He must have been!

Praying—But although His body was so tired the thing He wanted most was rest for His spirit and that could only be got through prayer. It must have been very late before He was able to rest and sleep, but next morning He was up early (i. 35)—picture Him as He went away to pray. With so much work to do He needed time alone with God for help and refreshment and guidance. Tell of the interruption which occurred soon after day-break (i. 36, 37). Was Jesus annoyed with them for coming? No, but He could not stay in Capernaum as they wanted Him to.

Travelling—Read i. 38, and picture Him going on to the next town to help people there. We are not told what He did there but no doubt they were the same sort of things He had done in Capernaum. There were many cities in Galilee in those days and from one to another Jesus went, healing and preaching everywhere. Imagine some of the scenes in these places, where would they sleep? How did they get their food? How were they received by the people?

Healing—It was in one of these places that a leper heard about Jesus. Let the children tell what they know about lepers and leprosy. Describe the Jewish laws about these afflicted ones. That of course made it very difficult for a

leper to go where Jesus was, but this man thought, "If He can heal other diseases perhaps He can heal me," and he was determined to try. Picture him coming into the town—other people shrinking away from him—some shouting to him to go away. Even when he came right where Jesus was no one would touch him and he pushed right into the room. Very vividly describe what Jesus did and the result (i. 41, 42).

Hiding—Read i. 44, and explain why he was told to go to the priest (Lev. xiv). But he was so happy at being healed that he thought only of himself and began telling everyone. It is good to be grateful but we should be obedient also. This man's disobedience gave a lot of trouble to Jesus. Everybody wanted to see the man who could do such wonders, and there was such excitement that Jesus had to leave the cities and stay out in the jungle. Let the children suggest how this would be more difficult for Jesus. Is there anything we can do for lepers? It would be unwise for anyone but doctors to touch them like Jesus did, but there are other ways in which we can help. Discuss with the children.

LESSON 6

LIFTING A LOAD

Mark ii. 1-12.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Read and compare details in the three accounts (Matt. ix. 1-8 and Luke v. 17-26). Note the greater detail in Luke. Compare its setting. In each case it follows the healing of the leper. From that time Jesus' visits to the city had to be private. Crowds would watch Peter's house and whenever He came the news would spread and crowds gather to see and hear.

"Study the crowd on this day. See Luke v. 17. Doubtless the 'scribes,' etc., had gathered to find out the claims of this 'Prophet.' Consider with what amazement they heard the mighty claim He made—'The Son of Man hath power on

earth to forgive sins.' No miracle of Jesus ended in itself; each was a fresh link in the chain of 'evidence' vouchsafed as to the reality of His claims. Note the conjunction here of spiritual and physical.

"John v. is probably the story of a visit belonging to this period. A study of that chapter will show how from the first the Divine claim of the Master was quite clear to the rabbis. They at least understood that this Man's works were only the signs of authority in His teaching. It is very important for teachers to grasp this. Christ never presented Himself to the leaders of His nation as anything less than the Son of God with authority. Consider how that presentation is made in this instance. The right of God alone to forgive sin establishes the direct relation of each soul to Him. We speak of 'sin against ourselves,' 'against others,' but *all* sin is against God ultimately. In pronouncing forgiveness Christ made unique claim of authority and confirmed that authority by the 'sign' following. This method of Christ shut the rabbis up to two alternatives—either acceptance of the teaching on evidence of the Power and Life, or rejection by ascription of the power to Satan (see iii. 22, etc.)." (Huntley.)

Aim of the Lesson

To show that Jesus has power to forgive sin.

Story for this Class

Introduction—In last week's lesson we heard of Jesus wandering about from place to place in Galilee in many towns whose names we do not know. Which was the big city where we heard of Him before? (Capernaum.)

The Palsied Man—Nobody in Capernaum knew where Jesus had gone to, and we can imagine how all were talking about Him and the things He had done on that wonderful Sabbath day. Many people had been healed that day, but some sick ones had not heard of Him in time to get to Him then, and now Jesus was gone. Think of the questions that everyone was asking about Him—when will He come back? Who is He? Tell of the helpless man to whom these rumours were repeated, and think what hope was kindled in

his heart. Describe his condition. Once his body had been strong to do a man's work. May be he had spoilt it with sin. Now it was not only his dreadful disease that troubled him; the memory of wrong done made his mind dark and sad. Then one day came a rumour that Jesus was back again in the city. Describe the arrival of four friends at the home of the palsied man—they also said Jesus was back again and they wanted to carry their friend to where He was. Think of the excitement as the preparations were made, and the new hope in the sick man's heart.

The Crowd—For many months, perhaps years, he had not been out of his house—now he was carried through the streets by his four strong friends. They had no difficulty in finding out which house Jesus was in, but it was impossible to reach Him. Vividly picture the crowded street, with the entrance and courtyard of the house completely blocked up. Tell of the outside staircase which the friends found and describe how they carried the sick man up to the roof. Tell what they had to do there (ii. 4). Think with what interest and anticipation the invalid looked round as he was lowered into the room, and soon he saw Jesus. Imagine how Jesus looked at him—and all the other people. What a disturbance the breaking of the roof must have been—was the owner of the house angry?

Sin Forgiven—But Jesus as He looked at the man saw more than the poor weak body, He saw right into the mind all dark with sin. He saw also the eager faces of his friends looking down through the hole in the roof, and He knew that they believed in Him. Read what Jesus said, ii. 5. Then the crowds began to murmur. Read ii. 7. This they said in their hearts, but Jesus could read their thoughts. They would not believe He had come from God. In all the crowd only the sick man really knew that the darkness had all gone from his mind and heart, and he was forgiven. He would not have minded going away with his helpless body now, he was so glad. But Jesus would cure him completely.

The Healing—Read ii. 9-11. Picture the scene vividly; the straightened limbs and strengthening arms, the man made whole in mind and body. Everyone could see *that* healing and some said, "We believe now that He *can* forgive sins;"

and they praised God. Suggest how the man might go out to use his healed body for God.

And surely some of those other people there must have come to Jesus afterwards to seek forgiveness for their sins. And we too can have our sins forgiven by Him.

LESSON 7

FACING THE STORM

Mark iv. 35-41.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

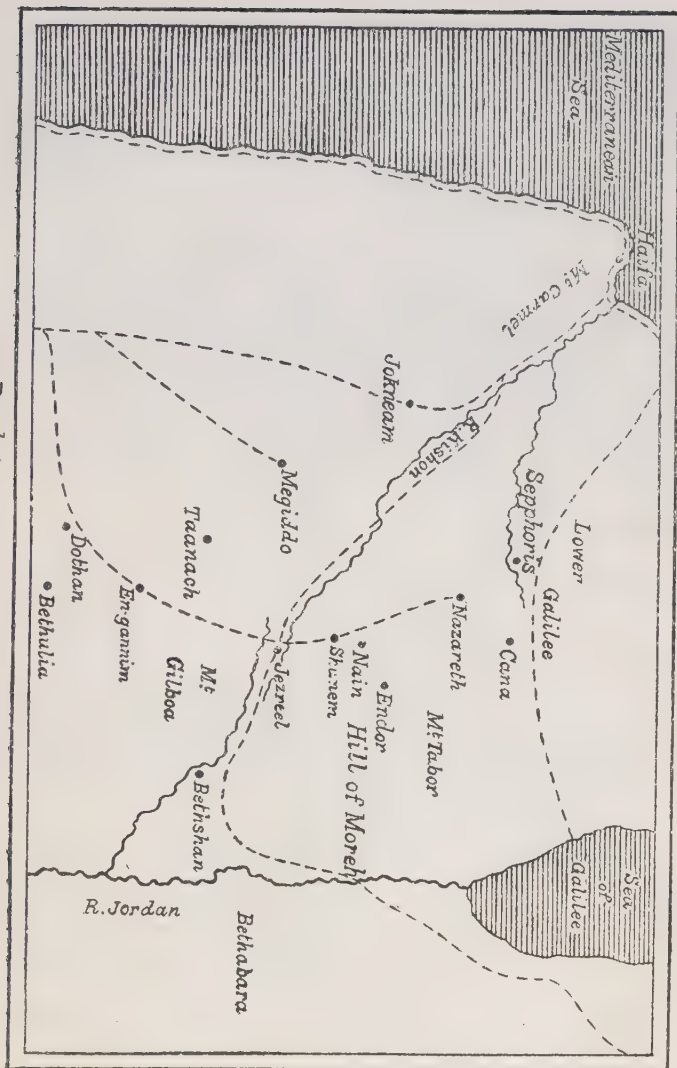
Carefully note on a map the contour of the Lake of Galilee. It was probably from Capernaum at its northern end that the party set out in the boat. The country of Gadara is on the eastern side, a district much more sparsely populated in those days than the west. Note the greater detail given by Mark than by the other writers—the other boats—the pillow which was the hard, coarse cushion used by the steersman.

“To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests we must remember that the Lake lies low, six hundred feet lower than the Mediterranean sea, that the vast naked plateaus of Jaulan (the district east of the Lake) rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of Hauran, and upwards to the snowy Hermon; that the watercourses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of the Lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the winds from the mountains.” (Thompson.)

Search the Gospels for other instances showing that Jesus had power over the forces of nature. “He rebuked the wind and sea showing that He regarded Himself as the Lord of physical nature as well as of the spiritual world. By stilling the storm Christ showed that, behind the inexorable and awful manifestations of nature, storm, pestilence, volcanic eruptions and sudden death, which seem to treat man's sufferings with indifference, there is the loving hand of divine providence. In the last resort nature is subject to God's holy and righteous will.” (Dummelow.)

SKETCH MAP OF VALLEY OF ESDRAELON

Roads



"The danger was extreme . . . the billows were actually breaking into the boat itself, which was beginning to be filled and to sink. Then, with sudden and vehement cries of excitement and terror, the disciples woke Him . . . Such were the wild sounds which, mingled with the howling of the winds and the dash of the mastering waves, broke confusedly upon His half awakened ear. It is such crises as these—crises of sudden unexpected terror, met without a moment of preparation, which test a man, what spirit he is of—which show not only his nerve, but the grandeur and purity of his whole nature. The hurricane which shook the tried courage and baffled the utmost skill of the hardy fishermen, did not ruffle for one instant the deep inward serenity of the Son of Man. Without one sign of confusion, without one tremor, Jesus . . . standing in all the calm of a natural majesty on the lofty stern . . . gazed forth into the darkness and His voice was heard amid the roaring of the troubled elements, saying 'Peace, be still!'" (Fairar.)

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the children's admiration for the courage of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Talk about storms. What is the worst storm that the children can remember? Were they frightened? Tell them of the worst you have experienced and what was the particular danger. Which is the worse—a storm on land or at sea?—and why? To-day we shall hear about a storm on the Lake of Galilee.

Teaching by the Lake—One day Jesus had been talking to a big crowd of people on the shore of the Lake. Picture the scene vividly and tell how He often did this. People kept Him a long time talking so of course He became very tired. But the people would not go and there seemed no way for Him to get away from them for rest.

Leaving in a Boat—Picture Him turning to the disciples and read what He said, iv. 35. This was a good thing to do for the crowds could not follow over the water. Imagine

them getting into the boat, pushing off shore, taking up the oars. Especially describe how Jesus lay down in the stern, utterly tired out, and fell asleep. Tell of the other boats also which had anchored alongside and which now were pushed off, filled probably with other people who wanted still to hear Jesus.

The Storm—It would usually only take them two or three hours to reach a quiet place on the other side of the lake, but this time, soon after they started, a big wind sprang up. See that the children realize how difficult it would be to make headway against this. And as the wind got worse the waves began to rise. Have the children ever noticed how the wind makes waves on a tank? Vividly describe the progress of this storm and the danger of the men in the boat. They understood the sea well and knew just how to manage a boat, but even they were frightened this time—it was the worst storm they had ever been in and they expected every minute to be tipped out into the water and drowned. But Jesus was so tired that He slept on and the storm never waked Him.

The Calm—Suddenly the disciples could stand it no longer—they seized hold of Jesus and waked Him. Read what they said, iv. 38. The fishermen who knew all about the sea were dreadfully frightened—they did not think what they were saying and really they were accusing Jesus of being careless. What would you feel like if you were suddenly waked like that and found yourself in great danger? But Jesus showed no fear at all. Vividly picture Him rising and standing calmly amongst His terrified disciples. Then He spoke to the wind. Read what He said, iv. 39, and describe the calm that immediately followed. Read what He said to His disciples, iv. 40. Picture their amazement and read what they said to each other, iv. 41. So they need not have been frightened at all while they had Jesus with them, and that is a story for us to remember every time we are frightened about anything.

LESSON 8

CASTING OUT FEAR

Mark v. 1-20

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Teachers should know that much controversy has raged about the incident of to-day's lesson. What was the true nature of the man's malady? To whom did Christ speak when He said, ‘Come out’? What is the secret of the immediate recognition of the Holy One by the demoniac? What power precipitated the swine into the sea? We cannot go beyond the facts narrated, and a frank and thorough study of the three narratives will serve to deepen the first impression that here our Lord asserts His supreme authority over the powers of darkness, and reveals His power to restore completely the utmost wreckage they have been able to accomplish in man. There is no scene in literature more dramatic, and no contrast more complete than between the maniac of the tombs and the wondering, humble learner sitting at the feet of his Lord, clothed (in whose garment?)—and drinking in the words of life. It is significant that afterwards Christ returned to Decapolis (vii. 31, etc.). The demoniac was His herald there.” (Huntley.)

Decapolis, v. 20, was the district south and south-east of the Lake of Galilee where ten cities had been built by the Greeks and Greek colonies established. In the time of Christ the people were a mixed and degenerate race. Note the position of Gergesa or Gadara, see Matt. viii. 28, on the eastern side of the lake where the shore is barren and empty and darkened by an overshadowing range of hills. It is uncertain whether both names were applied to the same place; no other town in the district is mentioned. Pigs were unclean and forbidden animals to the Jew, Lev. xi. 7, and would probably not have been tolerated on the other side of the Lake. Perhaps that was the reason why Jesus allowed their destruction.

Aim of this Lesson

To show Jesus' power over the forces of darkness and evil.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall last week's story of the storm.

In the Morning—When morning came they were far away from Capernaum and the pleasant part of the shore—they had been blown out of their way by the wind and now they found themselves approaching the eastern side of the lake where the hills are rugged and barren. Apparently they would find solitude enough there, and that was what they wanted, for this was the place of the dead—describe how the hillside was covered with tombs. Since it was quiet and rest they wanted this part just suited them, so they pulled in to the shore. Picture them getting out of the boat—making it secure so that it would not drift away—taking off some of their wet garments and spreading them out to dry—perhaps getting some food out of a box in the boat and eating it. But they were not left long in peace.

The Wild Man—Describe vividly the man who disturbed them—naked (Luke viii. 27)—covered with cuts and bruises—bits of chain hanging on his wrists and ankles—long matted hair—wild eyes—running. Imagine what the disciples felt like when they saw this madman coming—did some of them run for the boat? The sick man we heard of two weeks ago was made quite feeble and helpless by his illness, but this man had the strength of a terrible giant—he could snap chains and ropes with his hands. That strength was worse than the other man's helplessness, for it only made him able to do more harm.

The Departing Spirit—Jesus stood calmly waiting for him to come close. Describe what the man did as he approached (v. 6) and read the conversation that followed, v. 7-9. Then a strange thing happened. Very briefly describe what occurred to the pigs which were feeding alongside (v. 10-13). Tell what the men did who were looking after the pigs (v. 14).

The Healed Man—When the disciples turned from watching the pigs to look again at the man, they saw a very different scene. All the madness was gone and the man was perfectly quiet and as well as any of them. But he was naked and now that he was sane again he was ashamed of this so someone gave him a coat—which of them do you think it was? Picture him sitting with the disciples talking to Jesus (v. 15).

Two Requests—While they talked the men who had been looking after the pigs came back with ever so many more men from the city near by. Tell what they asked Jesus (v. 17) How strange that they should ask that when Jesus had just healed the mad man—evidently they cared more for their pigs than for Him. But Jesus at once began to do as they asked and He and His disciples got into their boat again. Picture the healed man following, and tell his request (v. 18)—how different from what the other men wanted! Read Jesus' reply, v. 19, and tell how at once the man began to obey. And he told so much about Jesus to everybody he came to that when Jesus came back to that country again nobody asked Him to go away, but all received Him gladly. And what that man did we all can do—tell others about Jesus. How glad some people in your village will be to know that Jesus is much stronger than any of the evil spirits they are so afraid of.

LESSON 9

RESTORING LIFE

Mark v. 21-24, 35-43

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Read the other accounts, Matt. ix. 18-25 and Luke viii. 41-56. Matt. ix. 18 may indicate that on Christ's return from Gadara (the day following that of the storm on the Lake), a band of John's disciples who had been discussing the authority of His teaching, met Him with the difficult question

about fasting. Meanwhile news of His arrival had reached Jairus at the moment when his daughter appeared to be dying. Consider how much Jairus may have known personally—he had probably witnessed the two miracles in the synagogue at Capernaum. Mark i. 21–26 and iii. 1–5, and heard the teaching given on these occasions.

At twelve years and a day the Little Maid passed from childhood and would be recognized as coming of age, a time of great festivity in a wealthy family. Now all hope was blighted. She may have heard and seen Jesus in the synagogue.

Twice Jesus spoke of death as sleep. What did He mean? He did not say “There is no death,” but He lifted the veil a moment. Is there any evidence that those He raised from death remembered the spirit’s journey? In speaking of death and the after-life to a child great caution is necessary. To generalize, and speak of joy as the certain issue of death, is to shut out the fact of sin and the need for salvation. On the other hand, to suggest fear is wrong and harmful to the child. The positive fact is that Christ has the keys of death, and that death is the passing into His safe keeping. It is to show Him again in His power and love, and to call out the child’s glad trust in Him that this story is told.

The people who were “put forth” were no doubt the hired mourners. Note which disciples were taken into the death chamber, and consider why these three were chosen this time and on two other occasions, ix. 2 and xiv. 33. (This with the story which follows are adapted from E. Huntley.)

Aim of this Lesson

To show that Jesus has power over death.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers something that happened in the synagogue at Capernaum? (See lesson “A Busy Sabbath.”)

The Ruler of the Synagogue—Tell of ten chief men who ruled the synagogue and of the chief of these ten, called Jairus. Help the children to realize his surprise when he first

heard Jesus speak—a countryman from a small town, yet He “spake as never man spake.” Still more surprised was Jairus at Jesus’ deeds, yet he was too proud to follow Him along with the rough fishermen. But in his heart he knew that this Stranger was greater than all.

The Ruler’s Daughter—Think of the proud ruler rejoicing in the little maid’s play, and questions, and opening mind. On Sabbaths often she would go to the synagogue with her mother, and she too would hear Jesus when He preached there. Think of the joy when her twelfth birthday was reached. But then came illness like a thick cloud over the sun. Tell of the quick progress of the fever—the coming of the great Jewish doctors—the fear and anxiety as she got no better.

The Search for Jesus—Then someone thought of Jesus—who was it first thought of Him? And they remembered seeing Him heal sick people in the synagogue itself—if only He were there then He could heal when the other doctors failed. But where was He? Picture the search and enquiry in Capernaum and the disappointment when He could not be found. They did not know, what we heard in our story last week, that He had gone over the lake, and that very day He was talking with the madman He had healed on the other side. But just as they were giving up hope of finding Him there came word that He had just arrived in a boat, and Jairus hurried down to the sea shore to meet Him. Picture vividly the meeting of Jesus and Jairus.

Jesus in the Home—Describe how these two pushed their way through the crowded, narrow streets towards Jairus’ house. Tell of the arrival of the servants and help the children to realize the awe that fell on the crowd as they said, “Too late!” Read v. 35, 36. Tell what they found as they reached the house and make much of the contrast between Jesus’ calm power and the panic at the house. Describe what Jesus did before going into the death chamber (v. 38–40). Tell who went in with Him—read what Jesus said to the little girl, v. 41, and vividly describe the result (v. 42). “Give her food” was the touch that told them it was all real. Did Jairus follow Jesus after that, we wonder? Did he own Him as Lord? We do not know, but Jairus knew that he had

found the One greater than the King of Terrors, and the little maid knew that she had heard one wonderful voice, the same in the Unseen Land as here in the sunshine. What a good thing it is to know that Jesus has power over death. Shall we not make Him our Master?

LESSON 10

SENDING OUT WORKERS

Mark iii. 13-19 ; vi. 7-13, 30

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ This mission was intended partly to prepare the way for visits from Jesus Himself, and partly to train the apostles for their future ministry. He sent them out ‘ two and two ’ for the sake of mutual encouragement. That is the true method of undertaking missionary work, as the experience of St. Paul shows. The apostles were to preach a little, but not much, since they were beginners. They were to prepare the way for Jesus, saying, ‘ The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ All accounts agree that they were to work miracles on a great scale (‘ power over all the devils,’ Luke ; ‘ to heal every disease, and every infirmity,’ Matt.). They healed by anointing with oil (Mark): cp. Jas. v. 14. Their power extended even to cleansing the lepers and raising the dead. This mission began about five weeks before the second Passover of the ministry (John vi. 4), and lasted about a month. Having dismissed the apostles, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of John v. 1, probably Purim, at the beginning of March. He then rejoined the Twelve shortly before Passover.” (Dummelow.)

“ The last recorded miracle in Capernaum—with the exception of the tribute money, Matt. xvii. 27—is the raising of Jairus’ daughter. From that time a great and organised campaign was to be made, that the whole of Israel might have the opportunity of accepting their King on the credentials of His message and works. It began in Nazareth,

and continued through the journeys of six bands of apostle-messengers to the whole land, attracting the attention of Herod immediately after the murder of John. The campaign probably lasted only a short time and closed amid the excitement caused by John's murder. The two bands of disciples—one dispirited and perplexed, the other jubilant with success—met together with Jesus (vi. 29, 30). Compare the two other passages telling of the mission, Matt. x. 1-20, Luke ix. 1-6. Matthew's account—as might be expected of one who himself received the charge and was one of the missionaries—is much the fullest; much of what follows in the same chapter may have been spoken then." (Huntley.)

Aim of this Lesson

To indicate some lines of service expected from the followers of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the names of any of Jesus' disciples? Do not spend time over this but let any who know tell.

The Choosing—Our story begins with the most famous choosing scene in the world. The King of kings was about to choose a little band of knights who were to learn to do His work when He would go away. He wore no kind of kingly robe, for you remember that when He was here He was in disguise, just like one of us, and only those willing to follow Him then could be His subjects or Knights. Think of the crowd from which He had to choose—describe rabbis, tax-gatherers, merchants, sick folk made well, etc. Then picture the calling by name and read the list, iii. 16-19. Children will be interested to note the new names the Captain gave to three of the twelve, also the suggestion of differences between them. What kind of men must John and James have been? Did He only want passionate, "thundery" men? Think of Peter, Andrew, and thoughtful Matthew come from his collector's office, Thomas and Judas, so careful with money. Help the children to realise that even Judas had qualities which the King needed.

The Learning—For a year or more the twelve had to follow and watch their King, that they might have a message to take for Him. Let the children recall things they saw Him do; but emphasize that the most important to them were the things He taught them in the quiet times when none else were there. Was that an easy year? Did they always have plenty of rest and food?

The First Mission—Then the time came when He could trust them to go for Him to places where He had never been. They were to be His ambassadors. Picture details of their preparation, beginning with sandals, coats, etc., and ending with the wonderful unseen gift which was to be their invisible weapon against evil enemies. What was it? Read vi. 7—power. Imagine a village beyond Jordan; two weary travellers arrive in the evening inquiring “Who is chief man of this village?” and going to his door. What was their message? “We are sent by Jesus of Whose doings you have heard. We are His messengers and are come to tell you His Kingdom is coming and to invite you to be His subjects.” People gathered to hear the strange news, but how could they be sure these were true messengers? A blind man happened to be in the crowd—the strangers called him and touched his eyes, saying “Jesus the King heals you?” Think of the excitement when they saw that he was healed and imagine how many would now believe the message. Think how the chief man would invite them in to be his guests, and how those who wanted to learn more about the King and His Kingdom would come in also to listen and ask questions. Think of other scenes, and let the children also suggest—how in some places the messengers and their message were received, in others they were refused.

Still at Work—That was the first little band who ever went out to invite subjects for the King. To-day, all over the world the messengers are busy, and still the invitation is the same. Are *we*, everyone. His loyal subjects? Then we too may be learning to be knight-messengers to others.

LESSON 11

COMPASSION ON THE CROWD

Mark vi. 35-44.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

This is one of the few incidents which is told by all four evangelists and the teacher should carefully read and compare all accounts. Note that John alone mentions the boy—was he a shepherd boy? Luke names the place where it happened—find Bethsaida on the map, not the fishing suburb of Capernaum from which some of the disciples came, John i. 44, but Bethsaida Julius at the northern end of the lake. See the description of the place, vi. 39 and John vi. 10. Tiberias, John vi. 1, is a name sometimes given to the lake of Galilee, taken from the Roman city of that name situated on its western shore. Consider why there were so many people in Capernaum just then and who they would be, John vi. 4. Note how they reached Bethsaida, vi. 33 and John vi. 23. Note the reason why Jesus specially desired to be alone with His disciples at this time, vi. 30, 31.

From John's account it is evident that "the miracle added fuel to the enthusiasm of the multitude. Jesus was evidently the Messiah, and they were more bent than ever on carrying out their wild project. The moment seemed auspicious. The Passover was at hand. Jerusalem would be thronged with worshippers; and they had only to escort Him thither in triumphal procession and acclaim Him King, and He would be hailed by a myriad voices and installed amid the nation's applause on His ancestral throne. Perceiving their intention, He peremptorily bade the Twelve re-embark and set sail for Bethsaida, the harbour of Capernaum; and then eluding the multitude, He stole away to His retreat on the hill-side, and gave Himself to prayer." (David Smith.)

Aim of this Lesson

To show Jesus' care for our every day needs.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What do you do when you are tired? Do you not think that Jesus' disciples were tired after the work we heard of them doing last week? Jesus was tired too.

"Come Ye Apart"—Read what Jesus said to them, vi. 31. Picture them slipping away as quietly and privately as possible in a boat (vi. 32), and describe the place to which they went (John vi. 3, 10; Luke ix. 10). Think how glad they were to lie down on the grass—the only people near were the few shepherds with their sheep—so they looked forward to a long quiet day without interruptions. They had probably eaten something in the boat as they came and now they only wanted to lie still and rest. But what was happening below them, at the foot of the hill on the shore of the lake? Describe vividly what they saw as they looked down (vi. 33; John vi. 23), and they realized that all these people were coming after them to see and hear Jesus! What should they do? Was there time to escape by going further still from the lake? No. Jesus would not do that—if the people wanted Him He would forget His tiredness and talk to them. Imagine how He received them (Matt. xiv. 14), especially describing how He healed the sick people amongst those who came. All day long He talked to them (vi. 34, 35).

"Give Ye Them to Eat"—Read, from John vi. 5-10, the conversation between Jesus and the disciples. Was the boy one of the shepherds minding the sheep? Seeing all the crowds of people he had perhaps left his flock and come nearer to listen, and when they began talking about food he had shown Andrew the bread and fishes his mother had given him in the morning. Now were they going to take his food from him? (Read Matt. xiv. 18). Describe how the people were seated (vi. 40) and tell how many there were (Matt. xiv. 21). Did Jesus talk with the boy while this was being done? Vividly picture how the food was distributed (vi. 41). To whom do you think the first piece was given? Imagine the boy's feelings as he saw all that company being fed from his little parcel! Tell how careful they were not to waste any (vi. 43).

"This is of a Truth That Prophet"—What do you think the

people talked about while they were eating and when they had finished? Read John vi. 14. Explain that these people expected a Prophet to come who also would be a King—do the children remember that that was what those Wise Men had heard about? So very soon these people began to say “He will be a King”—then “Let us make Him a King.” Imagine how excited they became at the thought—how their voices grew louder and louder as they talked about it—how at length they looked round for Jesus to proclaim Him King then and there—but He was gone—nowhere could they find Him. He had been willing to heal the sick people, to talk to them all day, to feed them, but He would not receive the honour they wanted to show Him. They wanted to make Him an earthly king, but He wants to be the King of men’s hearts.

LESSON 12

THE KING REVEALED

Mark ix. 2-29

For the Teacher’s Private Study and the Preparation Class

“The period between the feeding of the five thousand and the Transfiguration is a very important one. Teachers should read the sections carefully and note events that intervened (Matt. xiv. 22 to xvi. 28; Mark vi. 45 to ix. 1; Luke ix. 18-27). The impression is of a time of much journeying, where great crowds of sick folk sought the Healer, but with little comprehension of His true claims. Twice in the period, bands of critical or curious scribes came with their questions on the law and demand for a sign. Trace the places mentioned: Gennesaret, Tyre and Sidon, Decapolis, Magdala, Dalmanutha, Caesarea Philippi. The outlying districts of Galilee were being visited by the Light; Capernaum and the busy cities had had their day. St. Luke records only the immediate question which led to the wonderful unveiling of glory on the Mount. Study carefully the three accounts of the Great Question (Luke ix. 18). Christ has presented His

credentials to His people; what is the verdict? . . . Christ could not unfold the coming shame till disciples had risen to faith in His Person; and even now the words were an offence to them. Note how the vision gave the seal to Peter's words, formed the fitting climax to the Galilean ministry of fellowship and suffering, and prepared the hearts of the disciples against despair in the coming days . . . Here indeed was the type of sign the Pharisees would have hailed, but it could only be given to those who without a sign had believed. Even those for a moment mistook it as the beginning of a glory which should last, rather than the revelation of a hidden glory really existing behind all the sorrowful way to follow.' (Huntley.)

Note why Jesus went up to the mountain (Luke ix. 28). The vision was probably at night (see Luke ix. 37). The mountain was most likely Hermon the snow-crowned giant in the north of the land which can be seen for many miles in all directions. Caesarea Philippi, Tyre, Sidon, are all places in the north of the land which were visited on this tour.

Consider the reasons for the disciples' failure to heal the boy—they had been able to do this (see last lesson), but now could not. It was during the night, evidently, that the boy was brought to them, and in the morning Jesus returned (Luke ix. 37). The man probably was not a Jew for this was a Roman city and few Jews lived there. For this reason Jesus had gone there to find solitude.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the Glory of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Show a map of Palestine and let the children point out the Lake of Galilee and Capernaum. Then trace the route of the northern tour which Jesus took, especially pointing out Caesarea Philippi and Mount Hermon. Explain that He had gone away from the Jews' country because He wanted to escape from the crowds and have time to teach His twelve disciples. Describe the wild mountain scenery of that part as the Lebanon range culminates in the great mass of

Hermon. Show a picture of Mount Hermon if possible, or of some other snowy mountain.

Going up the Mountain—When Jesus was in that country with His disciples one night He wanted to go up on to the mountain for a time of prayer with God. Imagine Him talking to the disciples about it and think how they discussed what they would do. Finally three went with Him, tell which, and nine stayed in the town at the bottom of the mountain. Picture the four men climbing the mountain as the sun began to set and think what beautiful things they would see. Up and up they went till they reached the top of one of the lower spurs. Picture them sitting down to talk—then kneeling in prayer—then the disciples getting sleepy.

Seeing a Vision—Peter, James and John were very tired and slept soundly, perhaps for several hours. Suddenly they were waked by a bright light—it was almost like day light, yet different. Vividly describe what they saw (ix. 3, 4). They knew there was something wonderful about Jesus, but they had never seen Him look like that before. And the two men talking with Him had been dead for many years—evidently they were looking at people who were living in the next world. Read what Peter said, ix. 5. Describe how a cloud then came drifting down over the mountain and shut them in, and read what the voice said, ix. 7. Evidently Peter had done wrong to speak so—he ought to have waited to hear what Jesus would say first. Imagine their fear—and then their relief when they saw Jesus alone again and the same as ever (ix. 8). They never forgot such a wonderful vision as that—read what Peter wrote about it long afterwards, 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

Night in the Valley—But what were the other nine men doing down below all this time? They meant to sleep but they were disturbed before morning. Describe the anxious father who came to them with his terribly afflicted boy, begging them to heal him. They had often seen Jesus heal such cases, and as we saw last week they had been given power to do just the same sort of things themselves. So quite confidently they tried to heal this boy as they had healed others. But they failed! By this time other people were disturbed and came to see what was happening—did

they make fun of these men who could not work a miracle? How ashamed the disciples must have been and how they wished Jesus would come back! The boy still lay moaning and writhing, and they could not help at all. And slowly the night passed away.

Morning in the Valley—As it began to get light the nine disciples looked anxiously towards the mountain wondering when Jesus would come—and then they saw the four men approaching. Think how they pointed them out to the poor father, and picture him running to meet Jesus as He came. Read the conversation between them, ix. 21-24. By this time many of the people had seen Jesus and came running to see what would happen. Describe vividly what Jesus did (ix. 25-27).

Which do you think was the most wonderful and glorious—the vision on the mountain, or the kind action in the morning? The kind action is something we can imitate, for though we cannot heal as Jesus did we can be just as kind and helpful.

LESSON 13

HONOURING THE KING

Mark xiv. 3-9.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Study the setting of this story. John places it definitely six days before the Passover, possibly the feast was after the Sabbath day closed and before the journey of Palm Sunday. The previous night had been spent in Jericho in the house of Zacchaeus. This was Christ's first visit to Bethany since the raising of Lazarus a few weeks before. We can understand His welcome and the excitement His visit caused. Remember that he was now a marked Man with a price on His head; the order (cp. John xi. 57) would be well known in all the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Read and compare the accounts in Matt. xxvi. 6-13 and John xii. 1-8. Matthew

and Mark place the event just before Judas' compact with the priests (possibly on the Wednesday); this does not necessarily indicate chronological order; more probably the avarice of Judas, roused at the feast, was the first step towards his treachery. Note that outside St. John the members of the family are only mentioned by name in Luke x. 38-42. The description there tallies fully with that implied by St. John." (Huntley.)

Mary's ointment was worth, in Indian money, about Rs 140. Consider her motives in giving so costly a gift. Compare with Luke vii. 36-50, an incident which happened in Galilee much earlier. It is thought by some that this also was Mary. Both sisters were, of course, anxious to do honour to Jesus in return for what He had done for them shortly before in raising their brother from the dead. Each chose her own way of honouring Him.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage giving by showing how much Jesus appreciates what is given to Him.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How many disciples had Jesus? These were His special friends who were always with Him wherever He went, but He had many other friends living in different parts of the country. Three of these lived in Bethany, a little place near the big city of Jerusalem. Tell their names and their relation to each other.

Receiving Guests—It was nearly time for the great feast in Jerusalem and every day pilgrims were streaming up to the city, and many of them came by the road that led through Bethany, so the sisters must have seen many of the people going. Perhaps they said to each other, "Will Jesus come this time, do you think?" And of course they hoped He would and that they would have a chance of seeing Him again. Most of the people went straight on to Jerusalem without stopping at Bethany, but just before the Sabbath day began a group of thirteen men came right to Martha's house and stopped there. Imagine her excitement when she recognized

Jesus amongst them. Gladly she welcomed them in and asked them to stay over the Sabbath. Let the children suggest how the Sabbath would be spent helping them to appreciate the joy and peace of the occasion.

Martha's Feast—But Martha felt that on an occasion like that something special must be done. Jesus had not been there for some time and Martha had just been waiting for a chance of doing some special honour to Him. So she determined, as soon as the Sabbath was over, to prepare a feast for Jesus and His friends, and perhaps some of the neighbours



A PALESTINE FEAST

were invited in to meet Him. The Sabbath day ended at sunset and nothing could be done before then, but imagine the bustle and hurry there was in Martha's kitchen when she could begin. She worked hard and her servants worked hard and soon a splendid dinner was ready and the guests arrived. Describe the scene—they did not sit on the floor as Indians do, nor on chairs like Europeans, but they reclined or lay down on low benches with their heads towards the centre of

the room and their feet towards the walls. The benches were arranged along three sides of the room thus making it easy for those who served to reach everyone. The host always occupied the middle place with the chief guest next to him. Who was host and who Chief Guest at Martha's feast? And everyone who came that evening saw what great honour Martha wished to show to that Guest.

Mary's Gift—But Mary also wished to show honour to Jesus and she had another way of doing it. She had been treasuring up, perhaps for a long time, a very costly and precious flask of sweet-scented ointment called spikenard—she would give that to Jesus. Describe vividly how she did it—while Martha served the food in the centre of the room, Mary went round the wall behind the guests till she came to where Jesus was. Then she opened her ointment and put some on His head which was a very polite thing to do to a guest in that country. The scent was so strong and beautiful that everyone was at once attracted by it, and they looked to see where the scent came from and they saw Mary put the rest of the ointment on Jesus' feet. That was a thing that would only be done for a king—but then Mary knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the King. Think how surprised everyone was—some grumbled. Do not dwell upon this, merely read xiv. 4, 5. Then read xiv. 6–9. Jesus knew that she had done it because she loved Him—help the children to realize how much He appreciated her action. Is there any way in which your class can imitate her? Is there something of their own they can give to someone for Jesus' sake?

LESSON 14

“BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH”

Mark xi. 1–19

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The teacher should make a careful study of the order of events during the last week of our Lord's life. It will be seen that the subject of our lesson this week is placed earlier



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

by Mark than by the others, but here it is taken in what was probably its correct chronological sequence. Trace on the map the route taken by the pilgrims and note especially the point where the city is first seen. "The path mounts again; it climbs a rugged ascent, it reaches a ledge of smooth rock, and in an instant the whole city bursts into view. As now the dome of the Mosque El-Aksa rises like a ghost from the earth before the traveller who stands on the ledge, so then must have risen the Temple tower; as now the vast enclosure of the Mussalman sanctuary, so then must have spread the Temple-courts; as now the grey town on its broken hills, so then the magnificent city, with its background—long since vanished away—of gardens and suburbs on the western plateau behind. Immediately below was the valley of the Kedron, here seen in its greatest depth as it joins the Valley of Hinnom, and thus giving full effect to the great peculiarity of Jerusalem seen from its eastern side—its situation as of a city rising out of a deep abyss. It is hardly possible to doubt that this rise and turn of the road, this rocky ledge, was the exact point where the multitude paused again, and He 'when He beheld the city, wept over it.'" (Stanley.) This lament over the city was probably on the Tuesday—the cleansing of the Temple on the Monday—the triumphal entry itself on the Sunday, hence our Palm Sunday. For purposes of our story we may group several events on the one day as do the evangelists.

Consider His reason for entering the city as He did in deliberate fulfilment of prophecy, Zech. ix. 9. Hitherto He had refused kingship, John vi. 15, now He claimed it and gave the city one last opportunity of accepting Him. Apparently Jesus returned to Bethany each night that week—consider His probable reasons for doing so. He was now a Man with a price on His head and to stay in the city was too dangerous—He might have been privately killed before His work was finished. But this makes His bravery in entering the city in this public fashion, the more marked, and teachers should see that the children fully grasp the significance of this.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the courage and bravery of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall where Jesus was in last week's lesson and with what people. Remind them that Jesus was among the crowds going to Jerusalem for the big feast. Some of His friends must have been very surprised to know that He was going there, for in the city He had enemies who were trying to catch Him—they had even offered a reward to anyone who would help them to get Him so that they could somehow stop Him preaching. "Do they want to kill Him?" some people were saying.

Crossing the Mount of Olives—But when the other people started away from Bethany Jesus and His disciples joined the company of pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem. Picture the start from Bethany the morning after the feast. Probably most of the people who had come from Galilee with Jesus had already gone on to Jerusalem, but more were coming each day, so when He and His disciples started away that Sunday morning there were still many people with them. Describe the road as it wound up the hill side. Tell of the halt soon after they started and read what Jesus said to the two disciples as He sent them into the village, xi. 2, 3. Picture them going—getting the ass (give all the details), returning to Jesus (xi. 4-7). Vividly describe how Jesus mounted the ass and the immediate effect on the multitude (xi. 7, 8). Read xi. 9, 10. Why did they thus greet Him? Explain that what He did reminded them of what one of their prophets had written long before and they saw that Jesus meant to be their King and they welcomed Him accordingly. But in spite of it all Jesus looked sad.

Approaching Jerusalem—Soon they crossed the top of the hill—reached a bend in the road—and there before them on the other side of the valley was Jerusalem. The city stood on a hill surrounded by a strong wall, over the top of which could be seen some of the houses, but especially the top of their Temple. And now the crowd began to sing in praise of their city as well as in praise of their King. But Jesus now not only looked sad, He wept. Read what He said, Luke xix. 42-44. What terrible words—do not stop to explain them, but let the children realise that He knew

something that the other people did not know and that was so sad that it made Him weep. They all knew that He had enemies in the city, but they did not all know just how fierce and cruel those enemies were. But it was not for Himself that Jesus was weeping, but because He knew it was going to be so bad for Jerusalem if His enemies got their own way.

Entering the Temple—Picture the descent into the Kedron Valley—the ascent at the other side—the entry through the city gate. Imagine the scenes as the great procession wound through the narrow streets and neared the Temple. Jesus dismounted at the gate and entered the sacred precincts with the throng. There right inside the courts were people selling all kinds of things—have the children ever seen a similar scene at a Hindu Temple? But God had strictly forbidden this in the Jerusalem Temple and it looked now more like a bazaar than a place for worship. Think what a noise of talking there was as people bought and sold things. Read what Jesus said, xi. 17. Then with the manner of a King He drove these merchants out and no one stopped Him doing so for they knew it was against their law to sell things in the Temple. So twice the people had seen Him as a King—not only did He not attempt to keep hidden, but He thus openly and publicly showed Himself to them. We shall hear later whether they treated Him as a King—how should a King be treated? (Obeyed) Are we treating Jesus as a King?

LESSON 15

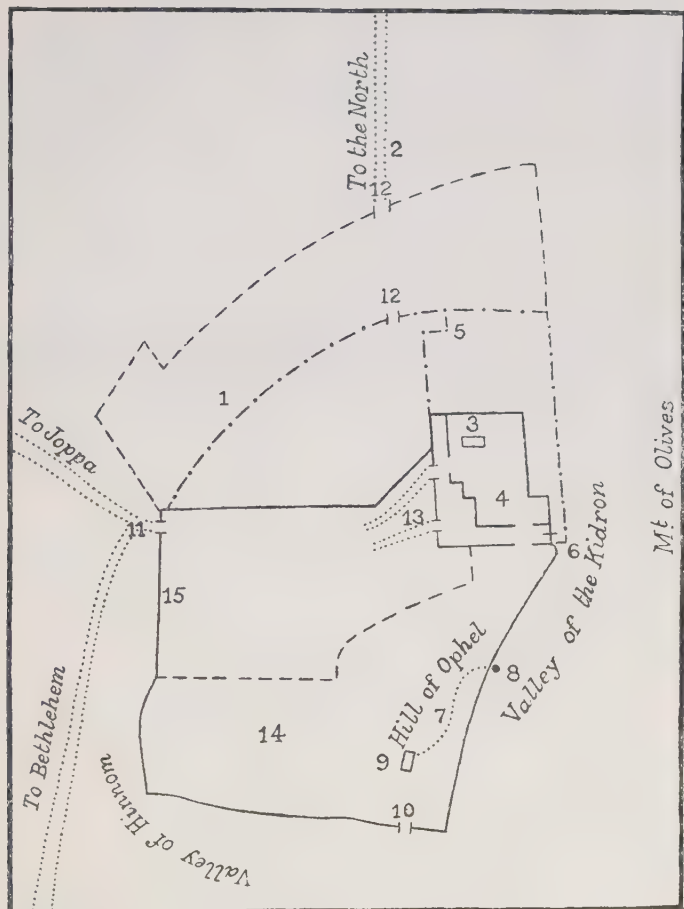
IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES

Mark xiv. 26–52.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Read and compare all four accounts of Jesus' last evening with His disciples and write down a list of all the events. These cannot all be included in the lesson for the children or it would be too long, but the teacher should have a clear

SKETCH PLAN OF ANCIENT JERUSALEM



Solomon's Wall —————
 Hezekiah's Wall
 Present Wall - - - - -

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Church of Holy Sepulchre. | 9. Pool of Siloam. |
| 2. Gordon's Calvary. | 10. Fountain Gate. |
| 3. Temple. | 11. Valley Gate or Western Gate. |
| 4. Solomon's Palaces. | 12. Damascus Gate. |
| 5. Castle of Antonia. | 13. Causeways over Tyropean Valley. |
| 6. Horse Gate. | 14. High Priest's Palace. |
| 7. Water Channel under Hill. | 15. Herod's Palace. |
| 8. Spring of Gihon. | |

understanding of what happened, Study from John's Gospel the development of the plot to kill Jesus—who first suggested it? Why? Notice especially His attitude towards the fact when He knew it. "The most important point for teachers to grasp is that Christ knew from the first that His rejection was inevitable except by the few who, choosing Him in His humility, would become the instruments by whom He should gather His Church. To speak of His plans as failing is to misunderstand that greater 'plan' of which His earthly life was one part, and His Church's present mission another." (Huntley).

Consider the warnings that had been given to Judas and Peter and the actions of each. Note the fact that one young man followed after the disciples had fled, xiv. 51, 52. An old tradition says that this was Mark, the writer of this Gospel, and it is significant that only in his Gospel is the incident mentioned.

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the children's sympathy and admiration for the suffering Saviour.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Why was Jesus going to Jerusalem, as we heard last week? (For the feast). Remind the children of His bravery in doing so when there was a price on His head.

At Supper—Each day of the feast week Jesus and His disciples mixed freely in the crowds in city and Temple till the great last day of the feast approached. Tell Jesus' instructions to His disciples and picture their preparations for the meal (xiv. 12-16). Describe the company that evening at supper—do the children remember how they would sit? Who were present? At this time Jesus was very sad—help the children to feel as did the disciples, the foreboding of something terrible going to happen. Read very solemnly, xiv. 18-21. No wonder Jesus was sad when He knew that in His band of chosen friends there was one who could do that! How

shocked all of the others must have been. Tell how Judas soon left the room—none of the others did anything to prevent him going—perhaps they hardly understood what Jesus had said. Read xiv. 22–25. Do not stop to explain more than that this was how the Jews always celebrated their feast and that it is because of what Jesus said then that Christians also celebrate their Communion. Tell how at the close they sang a hymn.

In the Garden—Picture them going out in the dark, quiet evening just twelve of them. Read xiv. 27, 28. Surely they understood at last that Jesus meant He was going to die. But no, Peter only seemed to hear “the sheep shall be scattered”—read what he replied, xiv. 29. He thought Jesus was afraid they would all leave Him like Judas had done, so tried to cheer Him by this assurance. Read xiv. 30. What could it all mean? Describe very quietly what happened in the garden (xiv. 32–41). Again help the children to feel as the disciples did that Jesus had some terrible weight on His mind. Read xiv. 38 and point out the warning. Did they wonder why He thus again suggested that they might fail Him as Judas had done? Read xiv. 42 and imagine the fear the disciples felt then.

Taken Prisoner—Already they could see lights moving among the trees and hear many voices talking. And at that minute Judas appeared (xiv. 43)—picture the scene vividly giving the added details from John’s account (John xviii. 3–8). Read also xiv. 48, 49 and show how reasonable this was. State impressively, “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (xiv. 50)—and after the warning He had given them too! What would you have done? Are there any times when you are afraid to say you are a Christian? Think how lonely Jesus must have felt then left by Himself in the hands of His enemies.

LESSON 16

LOVE UNDAUNTED

Mark xiv. 53—xv. 47.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The order of events varies considerably in the four accounts, but the following seems the most probable. The teacher should read all the accounts and add the references to this table of events :—

- Jesus a Prisoner in the house of Annas
- Peter's Denial
- Ill-treatment by servants of the high priest
- Trial before the Sanhedrin
- Trial before Pilate
- Pilate's conversation with Jesus
- Visit to Herod and further ill-treatment
- Return to Pilate
- Message from Pilate's wife
- Release of Barabbas
- Pilate's hand-washing
- Condemnation of Jesus
- Scourging
- Mocking
- Cross-bearing
- Crucifixion

Only those details recorded by Mark form our lesson for to-day. The sentence of death was pronounced because Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. His foes made use of the popular idea of a Messiah who would lead His people against the Romans in order to terrify Pilate; but the Jewish condemnation was on account of blasphemy—He called Himself the Son of God.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the sinlessness of Jesus.



Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that Jesus was arrested in a garden just outside the city.

Tried by the Jews—Describe the return to the city—the crowd—the flaring torches—the Prisoner. It was quite illegal to try any prisoner at night, but Jesus' enemies were in such a hurry to pass sentence on Him that they could not wait for morning, so He was taken straight to the high priest's house. There evidently were a number of the Jews' religious leaders waiting anxiously to hear whether Jesus was arrested, and when He was dragged in, calm and unresisting, they felt they had gained their ends. Explain that they could not themselves pass sentence of death on any one but had to send their prisoners with the accusations against them to Pilate the Roman Governor. So the business of these men now was to find a charge against Jesus that would be accepted by the Governor. What could they say against Him? They knew why they hated Him so much—He had found fault with some of their silly laws—driven merchants out of the Temple—done kind deeds on the Sabbath day—claimed to be the Messiah—but for none of these would the Governor order Him to be killed, they must find a stronger charge than that. Vividly describe their dilemma and how they sought for a suitable charge (xiv. 55-59). Of course if they had been at all fair or just they would have let the Prisoner go when they could find nothing against Him, but these men did not care about justice, they only wanted to get rid of Jesus. Picture Him, dignified and gentle, standing before them listening to everything. At last they turned to Him—read xiv. 60-64. Help the children to understand why, at last, the high priest was so satisfied—one of the worst sins was to claim deity and these men quite refused to believe that Jesus was God.

Tried by Pilate—So with this charge, in the early morning, Jesus was hurried away to Pilate the Roman Governor. It was much too early for him to begin business ordinarily, but with such an angry crowd in the street it was impossible for him to delay. Picture the scene as the fanatics shouted their accusation. See that the children understand that to Pilate this could only mean that Jesus was going to lead

a rebellion against the Roman Government. But did Jesus look like a person who would do that? Tell how Pilate called Jesus inside so that he might talk to Him quietly while the crowd stayed in the street (John xviii. 28, 33). Then when Pilate came back to the people he declared emphatically, "I find in Him no fault at all."

Barabbas—Tell of the Jewish custom to which Pilate now referred, and who Barabbas was (xv. 6, 7). Picture very vividly the tumult in the street, and read xv. 12-14. So Pilate consented. Read solemnly, xv. 15. If the teacher can secure a copy of some picture of the trial of Christ it should be shown to the children at this point of the story.

Set at Nought—Describe how the soldiers treated Jesus (xv. 16-20). Picture Him and two others being led out of the city carrying their big heavy crosses (John xix. 17), but apparently Jesus was unable to carry His far (let the children suggest why), so Simon, who happened to be passing, was made to do so for Him (xv. 21).

Crucified—Think with what satisfaction they gloated over their victim as they followed Him through the city—out of the gate—up the desolate hill of Calvary. Describe how the prisoners were nailed on to the crosses as they lay on the ground—then the crosses were stood up and fixed in the ground. Read the words written over Jesus, xv. 26; and what the mocking people said, xv. 29-32. Read what Jesus said, Luke xxiii. 34. All this had taken place before midday, and at 12 o'clock an extraordinary thing happened—describe it (xv. 33). Read Jesus' last words, Luke xxiii. 46, and the acknowledgment of the officer in charge, Mark xv. 39.

Buried—Among the crowd who watched was one of the Jewish leaders who had never consented to Jesus' death. As soon as he saw that Jesus was really dead he went alone to Pilate with a request. Tell what this was and briefly describe the burial of Jesus (xv. 42-46). Make no further comment but read impressively what Peter wrote about this long afterwards, 1 Pet. ii. 21-24.

LESSON 17

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

Mark xvi. 1-6; Matt. xxviii. 1-10

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ Let each teacher search and see how the Transfiguration was closely linked with the Resurrection. Immediately before and after it, Christ gave His first and second definite prediction of His rejection, death and resurrection. Note the exact terms of His prediction, Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23, etc. Search out His other predictions. Consider why the disciples failed to realise His meaning. Nothing is harder to overcome than an expectation rooted in childhood's teaching. What had the disciples been taught to look for? Consider the test to their faith when all expected evidence failed” (Huntley). Note the details of the Resurrection day given by Matthew that are not mentioned by any of the other evangelists. The teacher should read and compare all four accounts. The Lord's appearance to the women as told by Matthew, apparently happened later in the day than their early morning visit to the tomb. Mark expressly says that He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, xvi. 9, and John gives the visit of Peter and John to the tomb as happening before that. The probable order of events was therefore as follows :

The earthquake and opening of the tomb.

The coming of the women.

The coming of Peter and John.

Appearance to Mary Magdalene.

Appearance to all the women.

Report of the guard to the priests.

Appearance to Peter.

Appearance on the way to Emmaus.

Appearance to the ten disciples.

Put Bible references to each of these. To avoid confusion in the children's minds it will be well to include in the lesson the return of the women to the disciples and the coming of Peter and John to the tomb.

Aim of this Lesson

To make the children feel as sure as did the disciples that Jesus is alive.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact of Jesus' death and burial.

The Frightened Women—But there was one more thing that they wanted to do for Him, and that was to embalm His body so that it would not decay. They had to wait till after their Sabbath day to do this, but early on Sunday morning some of the women might have been seen making their way cautiously through the city before it was light, and going as quickly as possible out of the city gate and along the rough path outside the wall. Tell of their sudden fear and conversation by the way (xvi. 3). But it was too late now to go back and get any one to help—they must just go on and do the best they could. A quick walk over the maidan brought them to the garden, perhaps just before sunrise. Describe vividly what they found there, helping the children to appreciate their perplexity and fear. Read what the angel said, xvi. 6, 7. That was so wonderful that they did not understand it but they did as they were told—ran back to the city to tell the disciples. Picture their breathless entrance into the upper room—their excited telling of their tale—the scornful unbelief of the men. "Just like a lot of silly, superstitious women to see ghosts in a graveyard," they said (Luke xxiv. 11).

The Puzzled Disciples—Tell of Peter's decision to investigate the mystery for himself and picture him and John hurrying over the same path as the women had taken and coming to the garden. Tell in detail what they did and saw there (John xx. 3-8). There was then some truth in the women's story—the grave was empty—but there was no angel there. And in great perplexity the men returned to Jerusalem.

The Lord Himself—Meanwhile the women had apparently followed Peter and John out of the city, but they were tired and walked more slowly and perhaps Mary Magdalene was the only one who reached the garden again. When Peter and John left she stayed behind there, weeping and hoping that in

some way she might find an explanation of the mystery. Describe very vividly what happened, helping the children to appreciate Mary's surprise and joy. Then picture her hurrying back toward the city and meeting the rest of the women. It was evidently then, as they went back all together to tell the wonderful news, that Jesus met them all. Read what He said, Matt. xxviii. 10, and think how they ran back to the disciples, joyful in the certainty that Jesus was alive. Picture the scene when the women told their news to the disciples - help the children to feel the joyful certainty on the one side and the hopeless unbelief on the other. "He cannot be alive—He would have come to us if He were—you women are too credulous, you have seen someone like Him, but not Him." Imagine how the women would go and tell their other friends and think how many would believe them and rejoice in the great news.

The Evening Gathering—As the day drew to a close the disciples gathered together again to their usual meeting place—imagine their sadness and perplexity as each one who came could still throw no light on the mystery. Then Peter came in—think how subdued yet joyful he must have been—and tell what his experience had been. And as he was telling it two more men came in—picture them, hot, dusty and panting as the women had been in the morning—and very briefly tell their experience as they narrated it that evening. But in spite of all this testimony none who had not seen Jesus believed the story—"No, if He were alive He would surely have come first to us in this room—it is some one like Him you have all seen." And all at once they were conscious of another Presence in the room, yet the door had remained fastened. And as they looked they were at last all convinced—it was Jesus Himself, alive and in bodily form. Read what He said, Luke xxiv. 38, 39 and Mark xvi. 15. And that was what they began to do at once—the women, no doubt, had already been doing it all day. But still to-day there are those who have never heard of this most wonderful event that ever happened. Can we not tell somebody?

HOW THE DISCIPLES SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

Aim

To interest the children in the Spread of the Gospel.

LESSON 18

PETER'S SECOND CHANCE

John xxi. 1-19

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Review the events of the Resurrection day noting that five times Jesus appeared to one or more of the disciples on that day. The first message sent to them was that He would meet them in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 7), yet a week later they were still in Jerusalem (John xx. 26), and again He appeared to them there. Did they hesitate to leave the city till they were all convinced that He was alive? Our lesson to-day is concerned with His third appearance to the disciples as a body, xxi. 14, though only seven were now present. Note who these were, xxi. 2—the four fishermen, two unnamed disciples and Nathaniel. “Try and realise their perplexity even after the first gleam of Easter joy. They had no plan of campaign. Inactivity was impossible to Peter, and the fishing may really, though not necessarily, have indicated his return to the old life A helpful topic for the teacher's own consideration is the place of the Resurrection in the early Christian message and doctrine. The death of Jesus meant failure, despair, and the end of a great plan. His resurrection brought more than hope, the *certainty* of ultimate fulfilment, and it became the central message to the

world. Study such passages as Acts ii. 21-36 ; iii. 15 ; iv. 2 ; v. 30, 31 ; ix ; x. 39-43, etc. Had Jesus not risen the example of His life would still have been the noblest inspiration to pure goodness but the failure of His plans would have paralysed effort. His Resurrection is the pledge of power and fulfilment " (Huntley).

The appearance on the mountain in Galilee, Matt. xxviii. 16, and to the five hundred, 1 Cor. xv. 6, had apparently not yet taken place. Of the appearance to Peter on the Resurrection day, Luke xxiv. 34 and 1 Cor. xv. 5, no details whatever are given—we can only imagine the intimate and private nature of that interview. "By his three-fold denial Peter had forfeited his position among the apostles. Hence, before restoring him, Jesus required from him a three-fold confession of love Once Peter had boasted of a love and constancy greater than that of others (Matt. xxvi. 33 ; John xiii. 37). Now he is more humble. In his reply he will not say that he loves Jesus 'more than these.' He will not even say that he loves Jesus at all in the full sense of Christian love. All he will say is that he loves Jesus with the warmth of personal affection" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To show how a disciple was prepared for his great task.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that, when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples ran away. But two of them came back again secretly, and went into the high priest's house to watch what happened to Jesus there. These were John and Peter.

"*I know not this Man*"—Picture them stealthily following the crowd at a distance and being admitted into the high priest's palace (John xviii. 15). Peter went over to the fire to warm himself—tell what happened to him there (Mark xiv. 66-68). What a dreadful thing he had done—and it was just what Jesus had said he would do. He was frightened at being recognised so went out then to the porch. Tell graphically of his two further denials (Mark xiv. 69-71).

Just then the cock crew again (xiv. 72), and at that minute Peter saw Jesus turn and look at him (Luke xxii. 61)—then evidently Jesus had heard all Peter had said. Immediately the warning Jesus had given at the supper table flashed into Peter's mind, and he realised what a terrible thing he had done. Picture his remorse (Luke xxii. 62). Of course we know what happened next to Jesus—what do you think Peter did? John went to watch what they did with Jesus, but surely Peter could only think of his awful sin, and how he had grieved and failed his Master just at the moment when He most needed comfort.

"The Lord hath appeared to Simon"—Then, as we heard last week, Jesus arose from the grave and many of His friends saw Him that very day. There was one very private interview which Jesus had—we are not told anything that was said but only that He appeared to Peter. Let the children suggest what they would talk about—confession, forgiveness, encouragement.

"I go a-fishing"—Read Matt. xxviii. 7, and tell how at first they could not believe Jesus was alive so did not go, but when they had all seen Him then they went back to Galilee where their homes were. Imagine their arrival and what they would talk to their friends about. Perhaps several days were spent in spreading the good news amongst their old friends in Capernaum, and when all these had been told the disciples wondered what to do next. Picture seven of them walking one day by the seashore—watching the fishermen—talking of days in the past—coming to where their own boats were drawn up on the beach. This gave Peter an idea—tell what he said and what they replied (xxi. 3). Describe their preparations—how as darkness fell they went out on to the lake among the other boats—how they cast their nets out and drew them in time after time all through the night—caught nothing.

"It is the Lord"—Tired and dispirited in the morning they began to row to the shore when they noticed a strange man standing there. That of course would not surprise them at all, for there were often strangers about, but this one spoke to them. Tell what He said (xxi. 5, 6), and describe what happened. And at once they realized Who this Stranger

was! Tell who recognized Him first and what he said (xxi. 7).

"Come and Dine"—Describe vividly how they came to shore—Peter swimming, John in a little boat (xxi. 7, 8). Tell what they saw as soon as they landed (xxi. 9). Evidently there was not enough fish there for all, so Jesus told them to bring more. Picture some one cooking the fish while the others pulled in the net and counted the fishes exclaiming over what big ones they had caught (xxi. 11). Tell Jesus' invitation and picture the eight of them eating their food in the morning sunshine on the shore.

"Feed My Sheep"—Picture them still sitting there talking when the meal was done and read their conversation (xxi. 15–17). Can the children suggest why Jesus should ask that question especially of Peter and not of the others? Explain that in Peter's answer instead of using the same word Jesus had used, he used a word meaning "I love Thee a little." Perhaps after the terrible way in which he had denied Jesus he did not dare to use the stronger word for love. Explain in a very few words what Jesus meant by "Feed My sheep and lambs." So again Peter was restored to his place amongst Jesus' disciples, and he was given some important work to do for Jesus. We saw before that Jesus wanted His disciples to serve Him, and now we see again that He expected them still to tell others about Him.

LESSON 19

PETER'S BOLD WITNESS

Acts ii. 1–41

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

For the next five Sundays we shall have stories especially about Peter. He is a leading figure in the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts, but after his escape from prison and death in Jerusalem, he disappears from the record. In each of the first five chapters we find him addressing a company of people—note to whom he spoke in each case and compare his addresses. In last week's lesson we saw the disciples with

Jesus in Galilee. For forty days after the Resurrection He thus companied with them, but at the end of that time we find them back in Jerusalem, where the Ascension took place. The disciples had only ten days to wait after the Ascension for the "Promise of the Father," Luke xxiv. 49, Acts i. 3. Consider what they may have expected this "Promise" to be. Did they anticipate the gift being sent at Pentecost? Consider where they may have been when the great experience came—ii. 2 indicates a private house, possibly the upper room of i. 13—but the great excitement and publicity following so immediately suggest a less secluded place, perhaps some court or building of the Temple. Carefully study the experience itself, ii. 2-4. "There is a deliberate vagueness in the narrative—'as of,' 'like as.' It is not said that things were so, but they seemed so. Sudden and supernatural was the experience. It was as the sound 'from heaven' of a mighty rushing wind. There was no doubt of the source whence the Spirit came. Had not their Lord promised that the Father would send this gift? (John xiv. 16-26). The wind, unseen and mysterious, but potent in its effects, was the Spirit's natural emblem (John iii. 8). The tongues of fire distributed to one and all, indicated the new power to proclaim the gospel; tongues of fire indeed were theirs in their fervent zeal, in their purified enthusiasm, in their intense spirituality" (Feasey). Consider those who shared the experience, ii. 1 and i. 13, 14; and those who saw the results, ii. 9-11. Find on the map the places whence they came and note how widespread was Jewish influence. In Egypt alone it is said there were a million Jews. Many of these were in Jerusalem just for the feast and would take back to their distant homes news of the stirring events. Particularly consider the change which took place in Peter at this time. Carefully read his speech, ii. 14-36, comparing his quotation with Joel ii. 28-32; and look through the first Epistle of Peter for phrases similar to those used here.

Aim of this Lesson

To show how the disciples were equipped with power for their new task.

Story for the Class

Introduction—In what place did we find Jesus and His disciples in last week's lesson? (Galilee). Now we are to hear of them back in Jerusalem again, only Jesus had left them and returned to Heaven.

Waiting in Jerusalem—Before He left them He gave a commandment—read Luke xxiv. 49. How long they were to wait they did not know, nor just what they were to wait for. But it was just forty days since Passover and in ten days it would be Pentecost, so that was another reason why they should stay in Jerusalem. Describe their life in the city for the next ten days. Every day they met together somewhere—in a private house sometimes—sometimes in the Temple courts where they went to worship and there met other Jews who did not believe in Jesus. How often they must have talked about their Master's last command and wondered how long they were to wait and for what. Tell what Jesus had promised to them (John xiv. 16, 17 and xv. 26). Somebody was coming, but what we are told in these verses was all they knew about Him.

Pentecost—As the time of the feast drew nearer people began to arrive from many other countries to celebrate it. Some of these had perhaps been present at the Passover Feast, seven weeks before, and had seen all the excitement over the crucifixion of Jesus. But few would be able to come again so soon, so probably most had heard nothing of those events. Each day now the Temple courts were fuller and fuller—special services of worship were being held—old friends were meeting again. In all these things the disciples joined heartily, for they were all good Jews.

The Comforter—For two or three days these things went on and then came the chief day of the Feast. The Christians were assembled for special worship of their own rather apart from the general company, when all at once a great thing happened. Vividly describe what they heard and what they saw (ii. 2, 3). And at once they were conscious of some great Presence amongst them—Someone Whom they could not see, but Who was controlling their whole assembly. Not only was the whole meeting controlled by Him, but each individual felt

himself filled with a new power and a new joy. It was impossible to keep quiet any longer—all began to talk, praising God and telling of Jesus as the Saviour. Imagine how surprised all the other Jews were and describe how the news of this strange thing spread, and how crowds came running towards where the Christians were (ii. 6, 7).

The Bold Witness—Tell what it was that surprised these people so (ii. 8–11), and how they argued about it (ii. 12, 13). “They must be drunk,” said some in the crowd. That was more than Peter could stand—all his fear and timidity had disappeared as soon as the Holy Spirit came—and now he stood boldly in front of that great crowd to explain what had happened. Tell a little of what he said (especially ii. 14–18, 32, 33). Think how different this was from the frightened man who only a few weeks before had denied all knowledge of Jesus. Briefly tell the result of all this (ii. 37–41). Such was the beginning of the new work of the Holy Spirit in the world, but the same Holy Spirit is still here to help the whole Christian Church and each individual Christian to be strong and brave and loyal to Jesus.

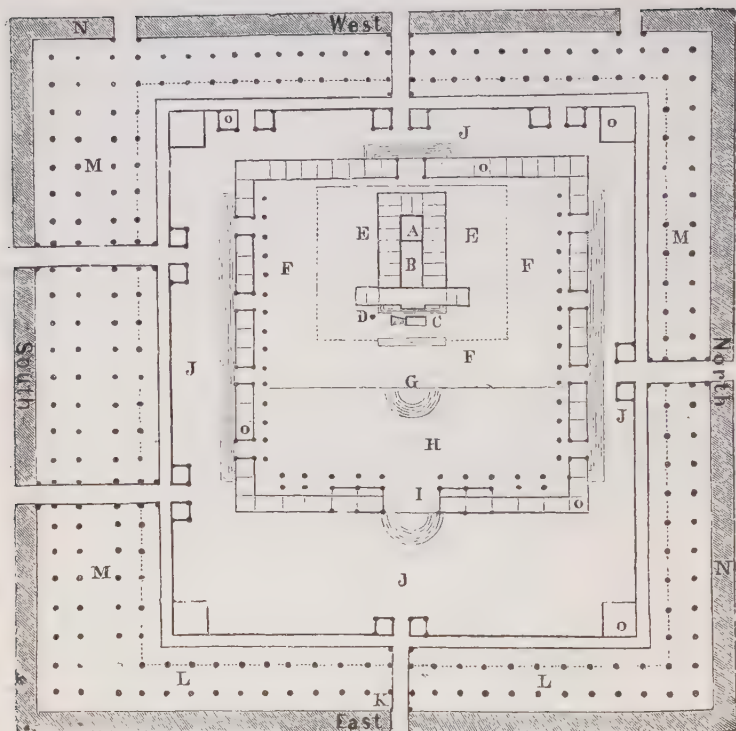
LESSON 20

IN THE POWER OF THE NAME

Acts iii. 1–21 ; iv. 1–30

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“To rightly understand this period imagination must be exercised to realise that early in that same year (probably) expectation had been stirred to its highest through the events about the raising of Lazarus. The Crucifixion was an unexpected and hasty end to the popular hope ; the strange reports of resurrection and appearances, which must have been heard by many, would keep alive the embers of expectation. The message of Pentecost which untangled many conjectures, by showing that both the Resurrection and Ascension had their place in the Jewish Scriptures, changed



PLAN OF THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF OUR LORD

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| A. Holy of Holies. | F. Israelite's court. | K, L, M. Solomon's |
| B. Holy place. | G. Nicanor Gate. | Porch. |
| C. Altar. | H. Women's court. | N. Wall. |
| D. Brazen Laven. | I. Beautiful Gate. | O. Rooms. |
| E. Levites' court. | J. Gentile's court. | |

the direction of the expectation from an earthly to a heavenly kingdom for the thousands who believed, and for ever set free the disciples from the fear of man. There were, however, thousands in Jerusalem who, having known of Jesus only through His 'wonders' and having little knowledge of

prophecy, needed demonstration of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, the wonder-worker, was indeed the Risen Christ. And to these the healing of the lame man by His Name was the beginning of a new and more glorious hope. 'The powerful family of the high priest, jealous and terrible as in the day when they condemned the Holy One, recognized the gravity of the situation for them, and once more dared to throw themselves against a Power they feared. Study carefully the chief points of Peter's message to the people in chap. iii. It was a message of hope, part of Jerusalem's second chance to receive its King' (Huntley).

Chap. iii. 1 indicates that the Christians still scrupulously observed Jewish ritual. 'The Apostles had not been enriched by the distribution of wealth, ii. 44, 45 ; iii. 6. Note that the man was absolutely helpless, iii. 2, the trouble being in his feet and ankles, iii. 7. See his age, iv. 22.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the change made in the disciples by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Read i. 8. and let the children recall the fact that Jesus had once given His disciples power to heal diseases. But they had not been doing that sort of thing for some time. And then we heard last week how the Holy Spirit had come to them.

The Lame Beggar—It was soon after that that Peter and John were going one day to the Temple at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, which was the regular time for prayer. Other Christians also were going besides many Jews who were not Christians. And as usual there were beggars sitting near the Temple. Picture the scene likening it to any similar one familiar to the children. Describe in detail the lame beggar (iii. 2 ; iv. 22) and how he accosted Peter and John.

The Healed Man—Vividly and in detail describe the Apostles' action and its result (iii. 4-8). Picture the amazement of the other worshippers as they recognised in this excited man the lame beggar they had known so long

(iii. 9, 10). Tell how as the crowd gathered round the two men who had performed the miracle (iii. 11), Peter stepped forward in the Temple court to explain (iii. 12-26). Tell that he gave all the glory to God saying that it was through Jesus, the One they had killed, that the miracle had been worked.

The Prisoners—Amongst those who thus crowded round the Apostles were some important men belonging to the Temple—tell who they were (iv. 1), and imagine their feelings when they saw the people listening so eagerly to what was said about Jesus (iv. 2). Fearing the influence of Peter's speech they determined to put the two Apostles and the healed man in prison (iv. 3, 14). Picture their arrest and imagine how their thoughts would go back to the night when they had seen Jesus arrested. Would they now be killed as He had been? Early next morning they were brought up for trial before the Sanhedrin—tell who were present (iv. 5, 6) and picture the august assembly. Read what they said to the prisoners, iv. 7. Again it was Peter who spoke first. Read iv. 8-12. Evidently Peter was not frightened. Tell how the prisoners were sent out of the room while the case was discussed. Read iv. 16, and see that the children appreciate the dilemma of the council. Calling the prisoners back they forbade them ever again to preach in the name of Jesus (iv. 18). Then Peter and John both spoke—read what they said, iv. 19, 20.

The Prayer Meeting—Describe how the three men were released (iv. 21), and how they at once joined their friends again (iv. 23). What would they do now?—run away from the city?—pray for protection from their enemies? They did pray, but read what they prayed for, iv. 24, 29, 30. How brave of them to ask that! How different they were now from the night when they had all run away when Jesus was arrested! It was the Holy Spirit Who had made all that difference and He is here still to help us to be brave and fearless as they were.

LESSON 21

IN THE KING'S NAME

Acts iv. 32—v. 29, 41, 42.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not keeping back part of the price, which they had a perfect right to do (v. 4), but pretending that the money which they offered to the Apostles was the whole price of the possession sold, which was not the case. Their motive was vanity and ambition: they wished to have greater reputation for liberality than they were entitled to Ananias had lied unto men, but the sin against man was so insignificant, compared with the sin against God, that St. Peter rhetorically calls it no sin at all The truth of the narrative of Ananias and Sapphira is guaranteed by its painful character. No historian would have gone out of his way to invent it. The punishment of death seems severe, but it must be remembered that our Lord's most severe denunciations were against hypocrisy. To brand religious hypocrisy for all time as infamous seems to be the object of this miracle. It is not necessary to suppose that Ananias and Sapphira were eternally lost. After this terrible punishment they may have been forgiven Solomon's porch, v. 12, was practically abandoned to the Christians, who made it their place of daily assembly, the Apostles teaching, and working miracles there With this, v. 15, should be compared the faith of the Corinthians in the efficacy of the clothes that had touched St. Paul's body (xix. 12.) Something of superstition probably mingled with this faith, but true faith predominated, and God accepted it" (Dummelow).

Teachers should make a study of the chief characteristics of the Christians at this time. Find the passages which illustrate each of the following: joy, love to each other, unity, loyalty to Jesus, bravery, faith, compassion, obedience. Consider (1) their habits of life, i. 14; ii. 1, 42, 44-46; iii. 1; iv. 23, 24, 34; (2) their attitude to the priestly leaders, iv. 19, 20; v. 28, 29; and (3) persecution, iv. 29. Note the stages by which the number of Christians increased, i. 15; ii. 41, 47; iv. 4; v. 14.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the further working of the Holy Spirit's power.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers how many people joined Jesus' few friends after Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost?

The Christian Society—Describe the life of the Christian community in Jerusalem in those early days (iv. 32-35)—their numbers—their telling about Jesus and His Resurrection—their love for each other and their generosity. Tell of the wealthy landowner from Cyprus who sold all his land and gave the money to Peter and the other Apostles to use for the Church funds.

More New Christians—Tell of the husband and wife who were converted who also possessed some land. This generous act of Barnabas gave them an idea—imagine them talking it over. "We ought to give something." "Shall we sell our land?" "How much money could we get for it?" "That would be a great deal to give." Picture them finally deciding to sell and then proceeding to find a purchaser. Think how Ananias would set about the business and picture him interviewing one and another till a satisfactory bargain was made and the land was sold.

The Divided Money—Imagine the scene as they counted the money when Ananias brought it home. How much it looked! What a lot of things they could do with it! Then came the thought that perhaps they need not give it all—if they only gave half that would be more than most people gave. What should they do? What would you have done? Tell of their decision to keep part and picture them carefully putting it away. Point out that there does not seem to have been any desire on their part really to do something to help the Church, or to do anything for Jesus' sake but they wanted to appear well in the eyes of the others.

The Tragedy—Feeling very well satisfied with himself, Ananias started out to take the rest of the money to Peter. Vividly picture him going—reaching Peter's house—presenting his gift (v. 2). He expected Peter to thank him, but instead—

read what Peter said, v. 3, 4. God had told Peter all about what Ananias had done! Show that Peter's argument was right—there was no sin in Ananias keeping part of the money—his sin was in lying about it. Tell his terrible punishment (v. 5, 6.) Think how his wife must have wondered why he was so long coming back. For three hours she waited, then went out to find him. Picture her following to Peter's house and being shown in to where he was. Read v. 8, 9. No wonder all the other Christians were filled with fear. But they learnt from that that God wants His people to be absolutely truthful, and that is why we should always tell the truth at all times.

LESSON 22

STEPHEN THE BOLD

Acts vi. 1-15 ; vii. 54-60.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Of Stephen's conversion we have no record. His name indicates that he was a "Grecian," that is a Jew from abroad, and this is confirmed by him worshipping in the synagogue where other foreign Jews attended (vi. 9). Evidently a great number of these Jews from abroad had become Christians and all the seven deacons were probably chosen from among them. Consider the Church's reasons for giving such work as this to so gifted a man as Stephen; would your Church have done so? Would you have accepted such an appointment? Compare vi. 8 with v. 12 and consider Stephen's probable connection with the events mentioned in vi. 7. Study the reasons and method of his arrest and the charges brought against him. In preparing the lesson the teacher should read carefully his defence and note two lines of thought:—(1) God is not confined to Palestine or the Jews (vii. 2, 9, 30, 38); (2) Jews always rejected God's messengers (vii. 9, 27, 51-53). Few of the other Christians were so broad-minded in their outlook—they must have been startled by his words—the Pharisees were angered. He seems to have grasped what no

other Christian yet fully understood, that all men were equally welcome in God's Kingdom, whatever their nationality. It was after this that Peter had his vision and call to admit Gentiles into the Church and that the Jerusalem Church officially acknowledged them, but Stephen had realized this before. Had he lived, imagination suggests that the trend of events in that particular might have been very different, and the Judaising tendency of many of the early evangelists, which caused such never-ending trouble to Paul, might have been avoided. Stephen clearly was a man before his times. Compare vii. 60 with Luke xxiii. 34.

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the children's admiration for this follower of Jesus, both in his service and his sacrifice.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Speak of leaving home for the sake of education—going to boarding school or to the big city to attend college. Has anyone from your village done so?

Stephen the Jew—At the time when Jesus was living on earth very many of the Jews had gone to live in other countries, but every family tried to send their sons, or one of their sons, back to Jerusalem to do some of their study there under real Jewish teachers. Tell of Stephen, one such young man who had come to Jerusalem to study under a great Jewish teacher. Help the children to picture his life there. Tell how he worshipped in the same synagogue as others from abroad but of course he went to the Temple too. He was clever and well-educated, rich perhaps, and must have been quite a leader amongst his fellows. When he had finished his studies he had apparently left Jerusalem and gone home again, but he came to visit Jerusalem again at just about the time we heard of in last week's lesson. Every day more people were joining the Church and everybody in Jerusalem was talking about this new sect. Think how interested Stephen was—at first perhaps he felt the leaders of his nation had been right in killing Jesus, but he wanted to be fair so very likely he went to hear Peter preaching. Imagine how

he learned more and more about Jesus from Peter and John and the others, till at last he too became a disciple of Jesus.

Stephen the Christian—It seems likely that no man so clever as Stephen had yet joined the Church—think how glad the other Christians were to welcome him. At once he became a leader amongst them—tell of his influence and work (vi. 7, 8). It was just then that a difficulty arose in the Church—tell what this was (vi. 1). Describe the great meeting of all the Christians to discuss this (vi. 2) and read what the apostles asked the Church to do, vi. 3. Imagine the talk there was as they chose the men. Let the children suggest what sort of men they would choose. Then tell of the seven, all from abroad like the women who were complaining, and amongst them was Stephen—one of the cleverest men in the Church—who thus undertook a subordinate task of helping to look after the poor widows. He was evidently the best sort of man, who would do the work well, and we do not hear of any more grumbling. But he still had time for preaching, and especially he talked about Jesus in the synagogue where the other foreign students were and this soon got him into trouble.

Stephen the Prisoner—Picture him talking and arguing in the synagogue. Although some of the cleverest men in Jerusalem were there Stephen always got the best of the argument (vi. 9, 10) and this soon made them angry. They determined to stop him but he was such a good man that they could find nothing against his life, and so many people in the city loved him that they had to be very careful how they did anything against him. So they did a very mean thing—tell what this was (vi. 11–13) and imagine how the lie spread (vi. 12). And then suddenly they arrested Stephen. Did they do it at night? Were any other Christians with him at the time? We do not know, but we can imagine the feelings of the others when they heard of the arrest. Of what would it remind them? Picture Stephen dragged before the Council of leading Jews—dignified, venerable men, the same who had tried Jesus and afterwards Peter and John (do the children remember?)—and there the false witnesses told their lies again. Describe Stephen as he stood before the Council

listening (vi. 15). Then he was asked to answer for himself. Tell something of what he said—do not spend too long over this or the children will be tired, but point out the line of argument as indicated in the teacher's study, and read impressively vii. 51-53. He knew that they were rejecting his message as they had rejected those others, and Jesus Himself, so it was no good going on talking to them.

Stephen the Martyr—Picture the rising anger of the councillors (vii. 54), and Stephen's fearlessness (vii. 55). Read vii. 56 and very vividly describe the final scene (vii. 57-60). Thus Stephen became the first Christian martyr by laying down his life for his Master.

LESSON 23

PHILIP THE ZEALOUS

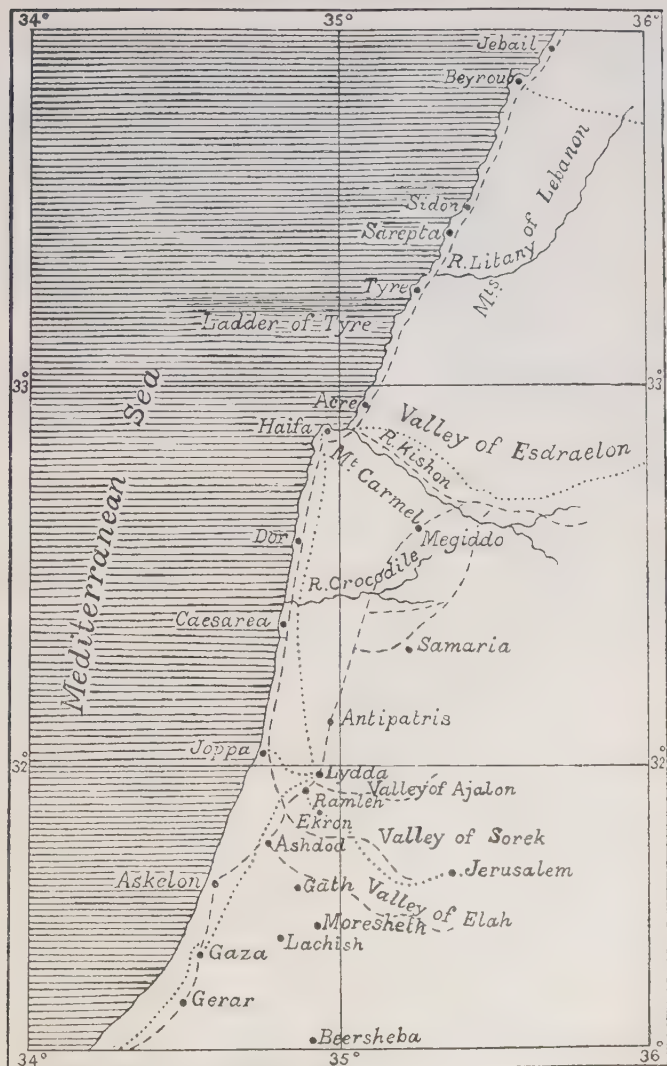
Acts viii. 4-8, 26-40

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Consider the circumstances which made Philip first go to Samaria, viii. 3-5. But for this persecution the Christians might have become merely a small Jewish sect. True, the commission had been given to preach in all lands, i. 8 and Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, but up to this time, as we saw last week, Stephen seems to have been the only one who had really grasped the fact that others than Jews were welcome in the Kingdom. Although the Apostles had been imprisoned before this time, it was not until the death of Stephen that persecution became at all general.

Philip was not the apostle of that name, John i. 43, 44, but a fellow-deacon with Stephen, vi. 5. His home was in Caesarea, xxi. 8, 9. We do not know how or when he had become a Christian, but his family were converted too. "Note the combination of business-like qualities with spiritual, vi. 3-5. Absolute obedience to the guiding Spirit is shown, not only in the mighty work in Samaria, but in willingness to leave this for the desert, without instruction as to the nature-

SKETCH MAP OF THE MARITIME PLAIN



Roads - - - - -

Railway

of the work to which he was called. Note his definite message; his quickness of decision " (Huntley).

The Ethiopian was evidently a Jewish proselyte since he had been to Jerusalem to worship, viii. 27—this fact indicates the activity of the Jews and the distance to which some of them had travelled. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was in very wide circulation at that time and had helped in many places to prepare the way for the Gospel. The quotation, viii. 32, 33, is from that version. There are traces of a Christian Church in Ethiopia from very early times, so we may think of this officer of the Queen as spreading the news of the Kingdom when he got home.

Aim of this Lesson

To indicate another stage in the spread of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What work was Stephen appointed by the Church to do at Jerusalem? How many helpers had he? One of them was called Philip and now we shall hear what became of him.

Preaching in Samaria—When the Jews had killed Stephen they began to persecute all the other Christians in Jerusalem and many more were killed. Those who escaped death only did so by leaving the city, and Philip was one who escaped in that way. We do not know how he got away, but his home was in a town on the sea coast away to the north, and he travelled in that direction when he left Jerusalem. But he only got a little more than half way there when he remembered Jesus had said they were to preach in Samaria (i. 8). So he stayed there telling everyone about Jesus. He also did some miracles like Jesus used to do. Perhaps some of the people who heard him remembered meeting Jesus Himself for He had been there a long time before, and now when Philip told about Jesus' death and resurrection many became Christians (viii. 6-8). Tell of the joy in the city and how Peter and John came from Jerusalem to help when they heard about it (viii. 8, 14).

Going to the Desert—Just then Philip received a message from God—we do not know whether he saw the angel who brought the message or whether it was a dream. Read the message, viii. 26. Think how surprised he was—what was the good of going to the desert?—there were no people there, and here in Samaria were many people wanting to hear about Jesus. But no matter what he thought about it, Philip was obedient and started off at once. Apparently he had to go right back to Jerusalem again in order to get on to the road leading from there to Gaza near the sea on the south-west. So there was danger for him on the way—think how carefully he would go and get past Jerusalem as quickly as possible. Then he started on that road across the wild, barren country down to Gaza. What would there be for him to do there?

Riding in a Chariot—He had not gone far when he saw ahead of him on the road a grand chariot—describe this and its occupant (viii. 27). Evidently the chariot was going slowly for the man was reading as he went. Read viii. 29, and picture Philip running after the chariot. As he came near he heard what the man was reading and recognised it as a bit of the Old Testament which told about the Messiah—read viii. 32, 33. When Philip heard this he spoke to the man—read what he said, viii. 30, and the man's reply, viii. 31, 34. Quickly Philip accepted the invitation to get into the carriage and of course he realised now why God had told him to come that way. And as they drove on together he told the African official all about Jesus, with the result that he too became a follower of His. And the African went on to his own country away in Africa determined to spread the Kingdom of Jesus there also. But Philip mysteriously disappeared, and we hear of him next in a town further north along the coast; and from there he preached in every place till he came to his home in Caesarea, nearly 100 miles from where he had met the African man. Although the persecution was bad it did this good thing—it sent the Christians into lots of other places to tell about Jesus. But we do not need to wait till we are persecuted, we can tell about Jesus wherever we are and thus share in the work that Philip and Stephen and the others were doing.

LESSON 24

VISION AND VENTURE

Acts x. 1-48

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Find on the map Joppa and Caesarea, the Roman capital and garrison city in Palestine, both on the sea coast some 40 miles apart. The journey occupied nearly two days each way, x. 9, 30. Note carefully all indications of Cornelius' character, x. 2, 22. This was very remarkable for a Roman soldier of his day. The Italian band, x. 1, is understood to mean one of the few special Roman regiments in distinction to the general battalions made up of mercenaries of various nationalities. An officer in one of these Roman regiments would probably be a man of noble family. Cornelius had evidently been attracted by the Jewish religion and he may have become a proselyte of the gate since he observed the three laws of Jewish piety—alms, prayers and fasts, x. 2, 30. This, however, did not entitle him to full Jewish privileges or there would have been no question raised about Peter eating with him. His influence was widely felt in Caesarea both among the soldiers and in his social circle, x. 7, 24, 33, and he was highly respected by the Jews, x. 22. Yet his heart was still conscious of need and this it would seem was the subject of his prayer, x. 31. An indication of what this need was is given in x. 43, 44—it was at the point where new light was given and received that God's sign was given. Compare the two visions, x. 3-6 and 9-16, and consider the meaning of Peter's. Whose was the greater condescension—the officer of high position, being willing to send to the house of a tanner for spiritual help, or the exclusive Jew being willing to go to the house of a Gentile? Consider Peter's dilemma, x. 28—no Gentile who had not been a full Jewish proselyte had as yet been admitted to the Christian Church, and there was sure to be trouble over it at Jerusalem, yet so sensitive was he to God's will that he at once obeyed. He first welcomed Gentiles into the house with him, x. 23, then went with them. But note his precau-

tion in taking with him witnesses, x. 23 and xi. 12. Read his defence to the Jerusalem Church, xi. 1-18. Consider the lesson learnt by Peter and the other Christians, x. 34, 35 and xi. 18 ; and by Cornelius and his friends, x. 43.

Aim of this Lesson

To show how God taught the Church that He wants everybody in His Kingdom.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact, mentioned in last week's lesson, that Peter and John came to Samaria while Philip was there.

Staying with a Tanner—From there Peter went from place to place up and down the country till he came to a town called Joppa. He must have felt very much at home there for it was a place like Capernaum by the sea coast where there were many fishermen. But he stayed this time not with a fisherman but with a tanner called Simon. Describe what his house would be like—small, noisy, crowded and very unpleasant because of the bad smell. Have the children ever smelt a tannery? Tell how he one day had a strange experience there.

Seeing a Vision—He had probably been out all the morning preaching or visiting, and came in at midday very hungry and tired. But the food was not ready and he had to wait. Some people would have taken the opportunity to rest but Peter was too much in earnest about his work for that—he thought of it as an opportunity to pray. Point out the difficulty of praying in those surroundings—the only quiet place was on the flat roof. Was that a good place at midday? (No, too hot). No wonder Peter got sleepy when he was so tired and hungry and hot. He did not go to sleep, however, but between waking and sleeping he had a sort of dream. Very vividly describe this (x. 11-16). Picture Peter rousing himself up again and thinking about his strange vision. Then a voice spoke again—read what it said, x. 19, 20.

Getting Ready for a Journey—Picture Peter coming quickly down off the roof and, as he did so, seeing three

strange men at the gate. Describe them—all foreigners, Romans, one of them a soldier. Read what he said to them, x. 21. How surprised they must have been to find he was expecting them. And how surprised Peter must have been to find he was to talk to Gentiles. (Remind the children how the Jews despised all other nations). Tell what the three men replied to Peter (x. 22), describing Cornelius as they did, so that the children will understand what a great and good man he was. Tell also of his vision (x. 3-6). Now if Peter had had no vision he would have had nothing to do with those foreigners, but remembering what he had just seen and heard on the roof he knew God had sent them. Imagine how he invited them in—gave water and food and made them welcome. Then tell of his preparations for going with them, especially picturing him visiting amongst his Christian friends there. Think what they would say to him and what difficulty he had in persuading any to go with him. Explain why he wanted them to go, and tell how at last six promised to accompany him next day.

Going to Caesarea—Vividly picture the start early next morning—three Romans and seven Jews. Describe their route, northward for forty miles along the seashore. It was too far to go in one day. Think of the incidents of the journey—where and when they would rest—what they talked about—what they saw. Imagine their feelings next day as they approached Caesarea a great foreign town where few Jews lived. (Do the children remember the name of the man we heard of last week who lived there?) Did Peter feel nervous? He had never before been in such surroundings. Think what the party looked like as they went on through the city till they came to one of the grandest houses there. This, said the Romans, was the house of their master.

Meeting the Roman Company—Describe the great man who now came out to meet Peter and tell what he did (x. 25). Imagine Peter's horror at being worshipped. Think how he would be given food and water and was then led into the great marble court where to his amazement many people were gathered. Tell who these were (x. 24), and read what Peter said to them, x. 28, 29. He had been prepared to meet one Roman, but here were a great company of them.

Cornelius then told of his vision—read Peter's reply, x. 34, 35. How ready he was to acknowledge himself wrong when God showed him his mistake. Briefly tell how Peter told that company about Jesus and they all rejoiced that through Him their sins might be forgiven. Tell of the great experience they had (x. 44) just like Peter and his friends had had in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And that proved to the Jewish Christians that Gentiles should be admitted also into the Christian Church.

LESSON 25

PRISON GATES OPENED

Acts xii. 1-19.

For the Teachers' Private Study and the Preparation Class

"This incident closes the account of Peter's ministry. Consider how often in the Bible a great servant of God appears prominently for a short time, then sinks into obscurity. In those ten years in Jerusalem Peter fulfilled his special ministry of 'opening doors' of the kingdom. His epistles were written many years later. The 'other place' to which he went (ver. 17) may have been Rome, or Babylon, or Asia Minor. (See address in his first epistle.)

"An entirely different state of affairs is pictured in this story from that in the last one in Jerusalem. . . . Then the Sanhedrin was attacking the Church, now the king. Then the Church's message rang out in the Temple porches; now its meetings are secret, in private houses A study of events about Stephen's death and the further organisation of the Church into a central 'committee' in Jerusalem and missionary agents throughout the land, will explain much. Jerusalem had had its Gospel proclaimed, and rejected it. Stephen voiced the charge (vii. 51, 52). Though the priests could find no further cause of persecution of those who lived quietly in their midst, they could not be ignorant of the

amazing strength of the movement in all places of their land, and their enmity found its instrument in Herod.

"Search references to James. Surely this is the shortest record of martyrdom ever made. What would it mean to Peter? to John?"

"Compare v. 19, etc. This time Peter understands he has been delivered to escape. Rarely in the Bible does the story of retribution so swiftly follow that of sin at here (vers. 20-23). Herod the Great died his horrible death just after his murderous attack on the babes of Bethlehem." (Huntley.) This Herod was grandson to Herod the Great of Matt. ii. Mary the mother of Mark and sister of Barnabas, Col. iv. 10, "was a widow of considerable wealth as her style of living testifies. Her house had a gateway into the courtyard which was kept by a portress. There was room within for the Church to worship (xii. 12). Many suppose that her house was the scene of the last Supper and of the descent of the Holy Ghost" (Dummelow). The James of xii. 17 was of course not John's brother, but the Lord's brother who was the head of the Church in Jerusalem.

Aim of this Lesson

To show how the Holy Spirit led through further difficulties.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact, from last week's lesson, that Peter was in the great Roman city of Caesarea. This week we find him back again in Jerusalem. It was Passover time, so many hundreds of Jews were gathering there. What event would the Christians celebrate at that time? (Jesus' death and resurrection, just as we do at Easter.)

Imprisoned—But instead of rejoicing at this holiday time as they had expected to do, a cloud of sorrow overshadowed them. The enmity of the priests had again burst out and King Herod was persuaded to kill James, the brother of John. Imagine the grief and horror of all the Christians. And then news went round that Peter had been put in prison, and he

was the next to be killed. All through that Easter time the Christians could do nothing but pray that somehow Peter might be saved.

Freed—What do you think Peter did all the time in his prison? Vividly picture him with four soldiers who were changed periodically, and he was kept always chained to two of them. There was no possibility of escape and it was known that he was to be brought out for trial and death after the holidays. So the days passed and the last night came—to-morrow would be the end. What would you have done on such a night? Would you have slept? Peter slept—he knew God would take care of him and it would be alright whether he lived or died. But in the middle of the night he was suddenly waked by some one hitting him on the side, and he found the prison all light like day. Vividly describe what happened (xii. 7-10.) Peter thought it was just a beautiful dream—no one else in the prison had waked so he thought he would soon wake and find himself still chained to the soldiers. But instead his guide suddenly left him alone in the dark street, and at once he knew it was no dream, but he was really free.

Escaped—Now what was he to do? If the police found him of course he would be taken back to prison. But he guessed that many of the Christians would be praying instead of sleeping that night, and he also knew which house they would be in, so quickly he went there. Picture him knocking at the big gate—the little window in the gate opening—a girl's voice asking who was there. And then to Peter's dismay, when she heard his voice, instead of opening the gate she gave an exclamation of delight, and he heard her footsteps running across the courtyard and up the stairs. He dared not shout, but as he kept on knocking, at last someone else came and cautiously opened the gate. Describe the scene in the courtyard as word went round that it was indeed Peter and everybody came crowding about him welcoming him and asking what had happened. Of course they quickly shut and bolted the gate again, and then Peter told his wonderful story (xii. 17). Picture then his secret departure—we do not know where he went to and perhaps he told no one else. But it is well he left so quickly. Tell briefly what

happened next morning (xii. 18, 19). But Peter was far away looking for fresh places in which to tell of Jesus.

So through difficulties of all kinds these brave men carried the Gospel into many fresh countries, and now it is our turn to help in the work of spreading the Kingdom of Jesus in the world.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Aim

To present the truth in the Bible account of the Creation of the world. To use the poetry of the Psalter to illustrate Genesis i.

LESSON 26

THE STARS AND THE EARTH

Psalm civ. 1-9 (Gen. i. 1-10, 14-19)

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Genesis i. is the record of long past events; Psalm civ. is the lyric which springs from the contemplation of the created world in the light of the Psalmist's vision. In Genesis God is *transcendent*. He stands outside the earth and commands; in the Psalm He is *immanent*, making the light His garment and the firmament His tent. In Genesis only God and nature are seen till the sixth day's work; in the Psalm there is a man, to feel and understand and sing. The Psalmist becomes the artist filling his canvas with pictures of cloud and light; the mountains and their springs, where wild creatures drink; and the sea with its innumerable life; night in the lonely forest, and man toiling in the day. It is the world of Genesis seen through the eye of one created and its theme is: The Lord shall rejoice in His works. No wonder the singer sends back the answer, 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet . . . bless the Lord, O my soul.'

"How can teachers so tell the old story that the children may see visions and rejoice? It is the Psalmist's point of view we would give them. There is only one way. The teachers must first *see*, and the sight must not end in flower or tree, but lead on to God . . . Are we in danger in our nature

study of almost unconsciously robbing the Creator of His glory in attributing all the ways of life to 'Nature'? Note how the Psalmist directly connects all with God: 'Thou openest Thine hand . . . ' (Huntley).

The first chapter of Genesis "has probably given rise to more thought, discussion and controversy than any other. Nor is this surprising, remembering its contents and the place it occupies at the beginning of the Book of God. And assuredly it will repay the fullest and minutest attention, study and meditation. In order to arrive at a right conclusion as to its meaning and object, it will be necessary to bring into view several considerations . . . Is it science? This at any rate can hardly be the primary purpose of the writer, for the Bible is a book of religion, and this is the introductory chapter. Besides, science is continuous and incomplete, and we are learning more and more of its secrets every day. In any case this chapter could only be scientific in the broadest and most summary meaning of the term . . . We are, therefore, justified in regarding this chapter as giving a simple, popular account of creation from the religious standpoint, and intended to be understood by people who lived in the time of the world's childhood. Its elementary character and religious purpose are the two-fold key to its meaning, and if this is continually borne in mind it will not be difficult to see its continued value up to the present day. The great fundamental yet elementary principles connected with the creation need to be taught to succeeding generations of people of various ages and capacities, and it is one of the most remarkable features in the experience of Christian teaching that this chapter is found to be adapted to intellectual and moral childhood in all ages and countries and at the same time not inappropriate to mature minds and fuller knowledge " (Griffith Thomas).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the magnitude of God's work in Creation.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let some child read Psalm civ. 1. Point out that it is about God—the one who wrote this poem was thinking about God and His work.

The Heavens—First, he looked up above and saw light everywhere and he thought that must be like God's clothing—he could not see God but he could see His dress. Read civ. 2. What a good thought that is—it means that God must be there in the light Himself all the time. But sometimes it is not light—does that mean God has gone? Read Psalm cxxxix. 12. It is as if God had two garments—a light one and a dark one. Where does this garment of light come from? (the sun). So it is the sun that enables us to see things. Yet there are some things which the sun hides. (See if the children can suggest that it is only at night, when the sun has gone, that we see the stars.) What are the stars? (find out what the children think about them.) Then tell how they are just like the earth we live on and almost all of them are even bigger than our world, but they are so very far away that we cannot see them at all by day, and we can only see them at night because they shine. The sun is not like the stars. What does it give us besides light? (Heat) That is because it is all on fire. When we look at it it appears to be a flat circle in the sky, but really it is a great ball of fire. And it is really smaller than most of the stars but it is so near to us that it looks bigger. Suppose God moved the sun as far away as one of the smallest stars we can see—what would happen to this earth? (See if the children can suggest that it would be so dark and cold that nothing could live on it.) But if He brought the sun nearer to us, what then? (We should all be burnt up.) But He has put it just in the right place for us.

But sometimes when we look up into the sky even in the day time we do not see the sun. Why? (Hidden by clouds.) Now if light is God's clothing what are the clouds? Read Psalm civ. 3. It is as if the poet said, "In the monsoon time and when the wind blows I feel as if God is coming still nearer to me." That is what we can think when the rain time comes.

The Earth—When the poet had looked at the sky, he looked at the earth and remembered that God made that too. Read civ. 5. Suppose the earth could be blown about like the clouds by wind, how uncomfortable and unsafe it would be! This verse does not mean that the earth does not move

at all but it can only move in the way God has planned. Explain that the earth is a round ball like the sun and stars, and that all the time it is turning round. The sun stands still and when it goes out of sight at night it is the earth that has turned round, not the sun. What is the earth made of? Tell of the different kinds of rocks—limestone, sandstone, or any particular rock in your neighbourhood—and of the soft earth of different kinds.

The Sea—Then the poet thought of the sea. The world is not all dry land, there is water as well. (If your children have never seen the sea show a picture of it at this point.) Read civ. 6-9. Imagine what it would be like to have all the world covered by water! But God has divided sea and land and made just sufficient of each. Have the children ever watched steam rising from water or wet ground when the sun shines? That is another way the sun helps us—it draws water up that way from the sea, thus making clouds, and these pour the water out again on the dry land. No wonder when the poet thought of these things he wrote that first verse—read it again, civ. 1.

Get the children to memorise during the coming week the passage we have studied, Psalm civ. 1-9, and give an opportunity to repeat it next Sunday.

LESSON 27

NATURE'S GARMENT

Psalm civ. 10-16. (Gen. i. 11, 12).

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"In the Bible the beauty and order of the world are recognized as evidences of Divine wisdom and power, Psalm viii. 1; xix. 1; xc. 2; cxlvii., etc.; but the sum of created things is not personified apart from God, as in much current modern thinking. God is Creator, Preserver, and Ruler; He makes all, Isa. xlv. 24, Amos iv. 13; and is in all, Psalm cxxxix. His immanence is by His Spirit,

Gen. i. 2. Jesus recognizes God's bounty and care in the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, Matt. vi. 26, 28; He uses natural processes to illustrate spiritual, in salt Matt. v. 13, seed and soil Matt. xiii. 3-9, and leaven Matt. xiii. 33. 'The growth of the seed is also used as an illustration by Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38. There is in the Bible no interest in nature apart from God' (Garvie).

"We are told that 'the invisible things of God, from the beginning of the world, are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made.' From the very first, a spiritual significance was embodied in the physical forms and processes of the universe. Nature as a whole was meant to be for man the vesture of the spiritual world. There are close natural affinities between the things that we see around us and the mysteries of our own life and of God's relations to us. Our familiarity with these things, as objects of use and profit in daily life, may hide their higher meaning and importance from our view; the blinding effects of sin may so veil them that they may suggest nothing to our minds; but they are nevertheless, by a necessity of their nature, continually testifying to us of the unseen world; and he who studies them aright will be delighted to find in them pictures of heavenly truth, shadows and reflections of eternal realities. Our Saviour's parables lifted the veil from the face of nature, revealed to us the exact relationship between the natural and the spiritual world, and connected the things of sense with the things of faith, from which sin had divorced them. And the analogies in what we usually call Christ's figurative language are not really metaphorical, but exhibit the perfect insight of our Saviour's mind into the purposes and ends of that material world which was created *by* Him and *for* Himself, as a magnificent diagram to illustrate His spiritual lessons and show forth His glory" (Macmillan).

Study the trees and plants which grow in your own neighbourhood, both those which are cultivated and those which are wild. How many of these are useful and how many have no commercial value but are purely ornamental? A right understanding of the things of nature would surely make us more appreciative of the trees and flowers; we should be ready to cultivate not only those which we can eat

or sell for money, but those also which repay us only with their beauty or their scent. We should be more careful not to wilfully damage trees or destroy plants, and we cannot too early instil this thought into the children's minds.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage a right appreciation of God's handiwork in nature.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall from last week's lesson the fact that God made the heavens, the earth, the sea. What does sea-water taste like? (Salt)

Water—Suppose sea-water was all the water we had in the world—could we or the animals drink it? (If the children have never seen the sea help them to understand by having a glass of salt water for them to taste.) But God has given other water. Let the children tell all the different sources of water—rain, rivers, springs, wells. If in your town water is laid on in pipes talk about its source and how it is collected and brought to the town. Distinguish between what God does and man's work in getting water. Let the children read civ. 10-13.

Food—Read civ. 14. Let the children tell every kind of food they eat which grows in the fields—all fruits, vegetables, grains. Some perhaps do not grow in your neighbourhood but can be bought in the bazaar. Again distinguish between God's work and man's (sowing, planting, weeding, harvesting, carrying, selling, etc.) making sure that the children realise how futile would be man's efforts apart from God's providence. Read civ. 15. Explain that wine is not the strong arrack or other drink that is so bad, but is made from grapes and can be made so that there is no harm in it.

Trees—Now let the children tell of all the trees or plants they know which neither people nor animals eat—the teacher should supply the names of others. Is there any way in which we use any of these? (Firewood, timber for building, etc.) But there are far more than we need for these purposes—why did God make so many? (so that the world

would look beautiful). Yet so many people break and spoil trees. Can we not help God to make our town or village beautiful by taking care of the trees which are growing there and by planting some others? Can we plant some flowers round our school-room or our church? Or is there a piece of waste land in our village that we can make into a garden? Encourage the children, with the teacher's help, to undertake something of this kind. Also get them to memorise during the week the passage we have been studying, Psalm civ. 10-16.

LESSON 28

NATURE'S WILD FOLK

Psalm civ. 17-22 (Gen. i. 20-25.)

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The rocks have preserved for us writings of the long past. Shells and chalk dust, frozen remains of mammoth quadrupeds, fossilised lizard and winged reptiles, fishes and small animals, all these chalk and limestone, solid ice and buried cave have preserved until this age.

Changes in animal life, as in vegetable life, have been seen during the age-long history of the world. The various stages of heat and cold, shortened day and night periods, through which the world has passed, have altered and varied life, both animal and vegetable, to meet the changed conditions.

Living creatures came, so the story tells, as the world was made ready for them. The story of the unfolding of the Creator's purpose in Genesis is also the story written for us on the rocks by time itself.

Gen. i. 20—"Let the *waters* bring forth." Scientists tell us that life was first generated in the waters of the young world, as were the earliest forms of vegetation.

"Fowl that may fly above the earth." A great many species of animal life now extinct were bird-like in that they

flew. Insect species, reptiles, as well as bird species, are here included.

“Great sea monsters.” The sea and its inhabitants were objects of dread, as well as wonder, to the Hebrews, Psalm civ. 24-26.

Study the Jewish laws regarding animal food: Gen. ix. 3, 4; Lev. xi; Deut. xii. 15, 16; xiv. 4-20. (This lesson and the next are adapted from the Sunday School Chronicle.)

Aim of this Lesson

To show a further stage in God's preparation of the world for man.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall what had been made in the world in our two previous lessons on creation.

The Silent Earth—It was a very quiet, round world to which God, in His loving care, gave form. There was the sound of the sea breaking on the shores and the noise of falling, rushing waters. New sounds came when the thick ferns and tree-tops waved in the wind, but yet the world was a very silent one. Only the music of the waters and the wind echoed through the quiet earth. Let the children suggest that the absence of animals or people would account for this, and imagine how silent your village would be without any life. Then living creatures came with the power to sing, and to cry and call to one another. This is the story of how they came.

The Life in the Waters—Far down in the deep waters there moved one day countless tiny creatures, for God had said, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life.” Let the children name any small creatures they know which live in water. The waters became the home of many moving, living things—there came jellyfish and starfish, there came little shellfish, each with a soft little body protected in a wonderful shell house. The sands of the shore found little shells cast up by the waves and sea creatures that liked to live on land as well, lobsters, crabs and shrimps crawled up and down at the water's edge,

Fishes swam in the seas and rivers, so now the waters held rainbows of colour within them. There came, too, great sea animals, some living far below in the sea's depths, and others that lived near the surface. Again let the children tell of any of these; and show pictures if possible. So the waters, hearing God's command, did "bring forth abundantly."

The Fowl of the Air—Now the quiet was broken by the shrill call of some of the great creatures, both on sea and land. Creatures big and small to whom God gave wings, flew through the air and called one to another. Tiny insects and big ones flew searching for green things and flowers to rest and feed upon. Let the children enumerate these—can they think of twelve different kinds? Birds too, and singing birds came. "God created every winged creature, and saw that it was good." Great soaring eagles that could look straight at the sun made their homes on high, tall peaks. Tiny red and brown and gold birds twittered and sang their little songs as they searched for nesting places in the nearest tree. Again, let the children name as many as possible of the birds found in your neighbourhood. Show a picture also of some foreign bird which they have never seen. Read Psalm civ. 16, 17.

The Beasts of the Field—But other creatures were given by God. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind," and it was so. The forests sheltered deer and tall elephants, bears and tigers found a home in the caves and the rocks, lions and all the great creatures who live in hot countries. The earth made a home for them too. Read Psalm civ. 18–22, and describe the life of wild animals of the forest—hunting food by night, sleeping by day. Show pictures if possible. Wise horses came and sleepy cows, sheep and goats with little, playful lambs and kids that skipped about on fine, warm days. All these came, for had not God made the world ready for them? He knew that living creatures needed sunshine, and night time with its darkness. No creature but found the right home for itself when God gave it to the world. Now the world guided by God's hand through the starry heavens had learnt of God's secrets. Every morning the sun, too, heard the

music that now echoed among the rocks and caves. "And God saw everything that He had made and behold it was good." Let the children tell what animals do for us or give to us, and, to show appreciation of these good gifts of God, encourage kindness to any animals in your village. Have the children any pets of their own to which they give food every day?

LESSON 29

MAN AND HIS POWERS

Psalm cxxxix. 1-18 (Gen. i. 26-31)

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

From the lips of the Prophet another version, an old and beautiful story, was told to the childhood of the earth, of how God made man; how with His own hands He gathered the Bactrian dust, modelled it, breathed upon it, and it became a living soul. Later the insight of the Hebrew Poet taught Man a deeper lesson. He saw that there was more in Creation than mechanical production. He saw that the Creator had different kinds of Hands and different ways of modelling. How it was done he knew not, but it was not the surface thing his forefathers taught him. The higher divinity and mystery of the process broke upon him. Man was a fearful and wonderful thing. He was modelled in secret. He was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. When Science came, it was not to contradict the older versions. It but gave them content and a still richer meaning. What the Prophet said, and the Poet saw, and Science proved all and equally will abide forever. For all alike are voices of the Unseen, commissioned to different peoples and for different ends.

For the children we are concerned with this story as the climax of the long preparation told in the preceding weeks. The secret of God's purpose is now fully told—light and form and life are already there in time for mankind to enjoy.

With the *loss* of the garden this series has nothing to do. It is not mankind's failure to appreciate the opportunity that we are here concerned with, but to picture as vividly as possible the greatness of the gift made to mankind.

Aim of this Lesson

To show that it was God Who made us.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Are there any nice gardens in or near your village? There are gardens where vegetables are grown, but are there any gardens just full of flowers? Have the children ever seen such gardens? Tell them of any you have seen.

The Garden—After God made all the animals as we heard last week, He made a garden. He looked for a good place, as *we* should do if we were making a garden. Within this well-sheltered garden were plenty of trees, fruit-bearing, shady, tall and beautiful. Grass was there, and flowers—the most beautiful that grew. In the shade of the rocks were ferns and the shy flowers that do not like a great deal of sun.

The Friendly Creatures—Many of God's creatures found their way into this lovely garden. Little furry rabbits discovered what a fine playground the grass made, squirrels shared the trees with the birds, big animals rested in the rock caves, and kittens and little foxes played with their mother. All kinds of God's creatures fed together and drank in the evening at the same place by the river's edge. It was God's garden so all that lived therein were friendly and happy.

The Man and Woman—Then came the two for whom God had made the garden, a man and a woman—Adam and Eve. God placed them there and said, "Have dominion over every living thing that moveth." And God, looking upon His garden and everything within it He had made, said, "It is good." So the man and woman lived there in the garden together, and because at first they did everything that was good they were very happy. They gave the creatures

names, and so friendly were all the animals that not even the smallest was afraid. Eve might take them in her gentle hands; Adam might lift the nesting bird from her eggs; neither animal nor bird but was happy. Let the children talk about ways in which people and animals are alike or dissimilar. All eat, sleep, walk, breathe, make homes. But people cook their food and animals do not. How are their homes different? Tell how men have made things—tools, carts, books, chatties, etc.—and as years have gone by they have developed and learned more and more. Tell of modern inventions like motor cars, uses of electricity, steam boats, trains, etc. Animals could not think of these, so we see that God has given to men powers that He did not give to them.

The Evening—There was much to do in the garden. All the day through the man and woman were busy. Happy though they were in the day-time it was the evening-time they loved the best. When the sun went down in the distant west, changing all the blue of the sky to red and gold and purple, Adam and Eve left their work and walked in the garden. The cool night wind blew softly about them, the twittering birds were silent. All was quiet and still. One by one the stars came out, twinkling lights in the darkening sky. And then the crown of the day's joys came, for God walked with them in the cool of the quiet evening hour.

So at last the round world that God had made knew God's secret. It had been prepared to make a lovely home for God's men and women. Have we ever thanked God for the beautiful world in which we live?

OLD TESTAMENT HEROES

Aim

To select such incidents as will nurture the Junior Scholar's Hero Worship and admiration for courageous goodness.

LESSON 30

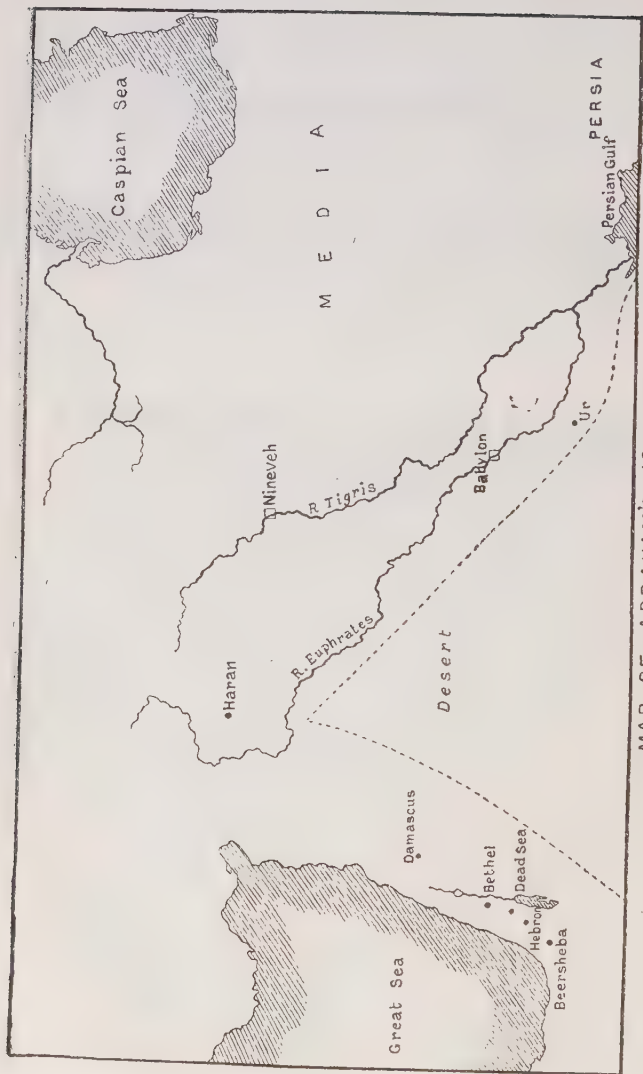
ABRAM'S JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWN

Gen. xi. 31-xii. 9

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Our lesson marks the beginning of a second section of the book of Genesis. The previous chapters give an account of the origin of the world, the beginning of human history and civilization, and the distribution of the various races of mankind as then understood; and . . . we gather impressive religious lessons. But now the character of the narrative changes and concentrates on an individual. We learn of Abram and of other patriarchal ancestors of the Hebrew nation in order to make clear how it was separated from other nations and became an elect race, through which the knowledge of God was to be given to the world."

Consider the religious motive which actuated Abram, xii. 1-4. This call had apparently come to him while still in Ur, and Terah, Nahor and Lot accompanied him on the strength of Abram's call. Emigration is generally explained by the natural endeavour of men to better their circumstances but this motive would have kept Abram where he was. See on the map the position of Ur of the Chaldees. It stood near the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris and was probably the



MAP OF ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY

capital of ancient Chaldea. The soil was rich and fertile, well watered by the rivers; luxuriance abounded and the highest civilization earth then knew was there. Study the route travelled by the party—north-west to Haran along the Euphrates valley for a distance of six hundred or seven hundred miles—then southward, xii. 9. This would take him through Damascus, and his first halt in the land of Canaan was at Shechem, close by where Samaria was afterwards built, one of the richest tracts in the whole land. Bethel is some sixteen miles north of Jerusalem, with Hai just on its western side, and Hebron twenty miles to the south of Jerusalem. Consider the people who formed Terah's caravan—apparently his whole family or tribe. Had Abram adopted Lot as his son after the death of his brother Haran? His age when he left Ur we do not know, but he may have been about seventy, xii. 4. The Chaldeans were an idolatrous nation, worshipping the heavenly bodies, especially the moon—how then did Abram know God? A study of the earlier chapters of Genesis shows that the line of faith had never been extinct and God had very direct ways of revealing Himself to men who sought Him in those days. For further light on Abram's motive read Acts vii. 2, 5 and Hebrews xi. 8-10. Consider on what very slight knowledge of God and His purposes Abram's faith rested—be careful not to read into these passages all the light which has been subsequently cast upon those purposes.

Aim of this Lesson

To emphasize the reality of the unseen world.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What is the name of the first book of the Bible? (Genesis) Our story to-day is from that book.

Living in Ur—Long, long ago, in a big city called Ur, there lived a boy called Abram. He saw many interesting things round about his home. Suggest what these were—the big river with many boats, some coming from foreign countries bringing different kinds of merchandise—the gardens in the fertile river valley—the busy streets of the city—the temple where the people went to worship the moon. All these things

Abram enjoyed except the worship, and he never would worship the moon, but only the God Who made the moon. Tell of his father and brother—how as they grew up the brothers married—how Abram had no children but Haran had one son—how Haran died.

Called by God—The longer Abram lived in Ur the more dissatisfied did he become with the religion of the other people—his great longing was to know more about God. Imagine how he would spend time thinking and praying about this—and then a message came from God—read this, xii. 1-3. We do not know whether God said this in an audible voice, or by His quiet voice in Abram's heart, making him feel that if only he could get away from Ur and the false worship there he would be sure to find more about God in another land. But as the thought grew in Abram's mind he talked to his old father about it. Imagine how they discussed it together—did Terah try to dissuade his son? What did Lot say?—and Sarai? But at last Abram got his way and they all decided to go with him.

Leaving Home—Had Abram gone alone he might have travelled like a Sadhu, but as so many of the family were going great preparations had to be made. Picture these vividly and imagine the final departure from Ur of this important family. Describe the route they followed up and up towards the source of their great river for many days and weeks and months.

Living in Haran--At last they reached another big city far up on the river and here they determined to stay. Think what may have decided them to do so—was old Terah tired of so much travelling? Did Abram think that perhaps here he could learn more about God than in Ur? Picture them settling down in a new home and imagine how Abram would still think and pray and listen for God speaking to him. He had no Bible to tell him about God as we have and there were no preachers, so he had to listen for God's voice speaking to him. And God made him feel that he had done the right thing in leaving Ur.

Travelling Southward—But Abram did not feel quite satisfied yet, it was no easier in Haran than in Ur to learn about God, and perhaps it was difficult in the busy life of the

city to listen to God's voice. But the rest of the party were happy. It was a good land and they were getting rich. And Terah was very old. So they stayed until Terah died and then Abram was more and more anxious to go—he felt God wanted him to go further. But his brother Nahor would not go; only Lot, his dead brother's son, was willing to leave the city. Picture vividly their preparation for another departure—they were much richer now and had many servants and flocks—Abram must travel like a great chief and Sarai as a very important lady. Lot and his wife, too, had great preparations to make. Think of the excitement and the farewells. Abram now felt that he ought to travel southwards, passing Damascus, coming to rich fertile lands. And there, perhaps one night while Abram was praying, God said to him, "Unto thy descendants will I give this land." Imagine how glad Abram was then that he had obeyed God's voice.

Living in Bethel—But of course if all the land was to be his he need not stay in one place, he would go and see more of it. So they moved on again, very slowly, still going southwards. Picture the place they came to (xii. 8), and imagine what fine views over the land they had from their camp on the hill. And the more Abram saw of the land the more he liked it and the more he was sure that God had led him.

Do we ever hear God's voice like Abram did? We ought to, because God wants to talk to everybody that way.

LESSON 31

ABRAM PROVES HIS FRIENDSHIP

Gen. xiii. 1-18; xiv. 13-24

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Find Bethel and Ai on the map, and note that from the hilly country between them it would be possible to see across to the Jordan and to the cities of the plain, situated where the Dead Sea now lies. The awful picture of life in these cities,

xiii. 13, indicates the moral corruption of the people of Canaan, for which, centuries afterwards, their land was wrenched from them. Note that Abram never dwelt in any city of Canaan; at Mamre his encampment was by the oaks, and outside the city, xiii. 18. Consider the events between last week's lesson and this, xii. 10-20. A severe famine which threatened to strip Abram of all his wealth was a strange first experience of the promised land. Abram's faith failed at the test; in Egypt he had to learn how his own carefully laid plans could not protect him, and a pagan monarch became the instrument of his reproach.

"Consider Lot's choice—it was the world's choice, immediate possession rather than the inheritance of faith. He would ensure against further famine by proximity to wealthy Sodom, though its state of wickedness must have been well known to him. Note the third promise to Abram, xiii. 14-17. Its emphasis is upon the numerous seed to a man who had just parted from his only heir. Abram was to survey fully the promised inheritance, that the joy of its possession by faith might be fully his. Note how his journeys enabled him to see the whole land.

"By far the most significant figure in xiv. 13-20 is Melchizedek. Look up references in Heb. vii. 1-4 and Psalm cx. 4. Compare him with Job, a man of God, but not in the line of Abram. He may have represented a Semitic race who ruled in the land before the sons of Canaan were scattered there and corrupted it. His rule was the patriarchal rule of the father-priest. The phrase 'without father' refers to his priesthood, meaning that it was not hereditary. Find if possible, on the map of the ancient world, the countries or districts mentioned in xiv. 1, 2, noting that the four kings who came against Sodom and her confederates were from the east. Note the incidental allusions to ancient war customs; confederacy of several small kings for defence; indiscriminate ruin and spoil; meeting of the conquerors; the arming of 'household-bands,' and agreement between groups of chiefs" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage friendliness.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall the names of people composing Abram's camp. What relation was Lot to Abram?

Quarrelling—Picture the life of the camp—large herds of sheep, cows, camels, donkeys belonging to Abram and very large herds also belonging to Lot. Each had many servants and herdmen to care for the animals and every day they wandered over those grassy hills looking for the best pasture for their flocks. Fortunately there was a great deal of pasture land, but the flocks were very large and it meant that some of the men had to walk long distances to find grass enough for their animals. This soon caused trouble and the servants of the two masters began to quarrel. Describe the occasion and progress of the dispute so that the children may realise its gravity.

Separating—Tell how this grieved Abram—he could not bear quarrelling and fighting. Picture him talking to his nephew about it and read what he said, xiii. 8, 9. How kind of him to put it that way instead of saying, "You go away to another country and leave me this." Now Lot ought to have said, "No, you choose first," but he was selfish, and he looked over the land from his tent he saw some places looked better than others. And the best part of all was a beautiful valley running to the south-east with the river at the far side, and he said he would have that valley. Abram made no objection, but he must have felt very sad to lose the one who for some years now had been like a son to him. Picture Lot and his servants and cattle going, and Abram standing watching them winding down the valley. And then God spoke to him again. Read xiii. 14-17. It was the same promise as before, but how could it ever come true now? He had no children, he was an old man, and Lot who might have been his heir had left him. But he knew that his unselfishness had pleased God and that made him happy and satisfied.

Hearing Bad News—Now there was peace again in Abram's camp—his servants were busy and happy and all went well amongst them. One day a strange man suddenly

appeared at Abram's tent. Describe him vividly—dishevelled, frightened, travel-stained, exhausted. In great excitement he began his story. Tell graphically what he told Abram—he had come from the place where Lot had gone to live, and he said a big army had come there to fight against the people living in that town. Imagine Abram's anxiety when he heard that and how he would ask, "What about Lot? Is he safe?" "He has been taken prisoner along with many more of the people," was the reply. Now what could Abram do? He had plenty of servants but no soldiers, so he could not go and fight that army. Perhaps the army might be thinking of coming to fight him next and steal all his animals. The safest thing now was for Abram quickly to move his camp further away. Do you think he would do that?

Rescuing Prisoners—Vividly describe what he did do (xiv. 14). Again we see how unselfish he was—he thought only of Lot's safety, not at all of his own. It was not only a dangerous thing to do but very difficult. The army with the prisoners was a long way away and Abram and his men had to go far before they found a trace of them. Describe how cautiously they approached the enemy—silently surrounded them by night—suddenly attacked them (xiv. 15). The soldiers were so frightened that they just ran away and Abram's men ran after them and did not stop till they got nearly to Damascus, 140 miles away. And all the prisoners and the things the soldiers had stolen were left behind. Think how glad Abram was when he found them all safe and how glad Lot must have been to find his Uncle's men surrounding him and taking him and his friends safely back home again (xiv. 16).

Receiving Praise—Tell of the people who met them on their way back home—first the king of Sodom, the town which had been attacked (xiv. 17). Tell the conversation he had with Abram (xiv. 21-24). Then came another king, Melchizedek of Jerusalem, who brought some food to the people (xiv. 18.) Read what he said to Abram, xiv. 19, 20. How happy Abram must have been! Which man do the children like best, Abram or Lot? Suggest ways in which they can imitate Abram.

LESSON 32

ABRAM THE OBEDIENT

Gen. xxi. 1-8 ; xxii. 1-19.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

For the next three lessons Isaac will be the central figure. On a map find the places mentioned in this lesson. His birthplace is not stated but it was probably Beersheba, xxi. 31, 33 and xxii. 19, almost at the southern extremity of the land. Moriah, where Jerusalem was afterwards built, 2 Chron. iii. 1, was fifty miles north of that, so that the journey would occupy not less than four days each way, xxii. 4. Study God's promises to Abram, xii. 2 ; xv. 2-5 ; xvii. 1-7 ; xviii. 1-15. In xxii. 1-19 "we have the crowning proof that Abram was willing to resign all that was dearest to him at the bidding of God, even that son on whose life depended the fulfilment of the divine promises. But his trial must also be regarded as the occasion of bringing about an advance in the moral standard of the men of his time, which was gradually to become universal. In Abram's day the sacrifice of the firstborn was a common practice among the Semitic races, and was regarded as the most pleasing service which men could offer to their deities. It was the 'giving of their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul,' Mic. vi. 7. The horrible custom was even practised by the Jews in the dark days of Ahaz and Manasseh : cp. 2 King xxiii. 10 and 2 Chron. xxviii. 3 ; xxxiii. 6. . . . The custom probably prevailed among the tribes in whose midst Abram dwelt, and it was borne in upon him that he should show his devotion to God in this way also He did not hesitate or delay, though his heart must have been wrung by the very thought. He had covenanted to give up his own will to the will of God, and in fulfilment of his obedience he was willing to sacrifice his own son. Self-sacrifice is the supreme test of faith, and Abram was not found wanting ; cp. Heb. xi. 17-19. The will, however, was taken for the deed, and regarded as sufficient

proof of his loyalty and obedience The substitution of the ram involves a recognition of God's right to demand sacrifice for His sake, and preserves the spirit which prompted Abram's act, while at the same time it indicates the objectionableness of human sacrifices" (Dummelow).

"The secret of victory was two fold, Abram *believed* God, and he obeyed Him. On these two facts rests his universal and age-long reputation. Faith is the root of obedience; and obedience is the fruit of faith. These are inseparably united" (Scroggie). Consider also Isaac's attitude—he was old enough and strong enough to take the journey and to carry the firewood, perhaps sixteen years of age, and could easily have resisted and escaped from his old father. The fact that he did not do so indicates his complete renunciation and acquiescence in his father's act. Note the change of name, xvii. 5.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage obedience as shown by both Abram and Isaac.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall again the names of Abram's family noting that he had no son. Tell of God's promise.

The Old Man's Son—It was not till Abram was hundred years old that this promise came true, and then a baby boy was born to him and Sarai. Tell his name and imagine the joy of the old people. Picture the boy growing up in the camp surrounded by admiring servants and every comfort that could be provided in such circumstances. Tell of the big feast when he was weaned (xxi. 8). Describe his life till he was about sixteen years of age. Abram was still as anxious as ever to know and serve God, and he taught Isaac all he knew.

The Old Man's Testing—Imagine him one night praying as he often did out on the hill side. The animals had been safely shut up for the night and in some of the tents lights were already put out, but still the master of all the camp stayed talking with God. This night he had been thinking of how some of the people round about him would give their

children in burnt offerings to their idols, and a voice in his heart said, "Would you give your son in that way for Me?" Imagine his horror—was God requiring that of him? But if Isaac were dead how could God's promises to his descendants be fulfilled? Yet the more he thought of it the more sure he felt that he must do this or displease God. Help the children to appreciate what it meant to Abram, and what a triumph of obedience it was when he decided to offer up Isaac. Did he sleep at all that night?

The Long Journey—Early next morning Abram was about preparing for a journey. Describe these preparations (xxii. 3)—how he waked his servants—gave his orders—called Isaac—told Sarai they were going on a few days' journey to sacrifice to God in a certain place and wanted food preparing. Think how glad and happy Isaac was—did you ever go on a journey with your father? Picture the start—the first day's journey—the camping on the hillside at night—the next day's march. Think of the new things they would see—flowers, birds, distant views. And imagine the different feelings of father and son—the one happy and excited, the other so perplexed and heart-broken. On the third day Abram pointed out a mountain ahead of them and said, "That is where we are going to."

The Sacrifice—Vividly describe what happened when they came near to the mountain (xxii. 5, 6), and picture the old man and the boy going on alone. Read xxii. 7, 8—a very natural question for the boy to ask, but think how his words must have cut Abram like a knife. Describe how they built the altar and imagine them then sitting down while Abram told Isaac what he intended to do. How shocked Isaac was, but as Abram explained that he believed it was God's will the boy yielded. Would you like to die like that? Describe the preparations for the sacrifice (xxii. 9, 10).

The Voice from Heaven—Just at that moment a voice called Abram. Read what it said, xxii. 12. It was an angel from Heaven—God did not want Isaac to be killed after all; He only wanted to know whether Abram would be obedient. Think how quickly Abram cut the ropes that tied Isaac and they both thanked God for the release. Tell what they offered instead (xxii. 13).

The Return Home—Briefly tell of the return journey—Abram enjoyed this as much as Isaac did. Think how glad they both were that they had been obedient—they had not lost anything by it and they understood God better than before.

LESSON 33

ELIEZER PROVES GOD'S GUIDANCE

Genesis xxiv.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The true spirit of (Eliezer) is seen in his earnest prayer for guidance (xxiv. 12); his task was a difficult one. He was on a very unlikely and unusual errand, and so he prays that the God of his master would give him good success. Not only does he pray for guidance, but for grace (xxiv. 13, 14). He seeks to know the road and then asks for power to walk along it. He requests opportunities, and then grace to use them. There is scarcely anything more touching and beautiful than this prayer, especially in the emphasis upon his master, and his desire that God would show kindness to Abram. . . . We cannot fail to notice his perfect courtesy (xxiv. 17). . . his patience (xxiv. 21). He will not force matters, for there must be no hurry. The man is filled with a holy watchfulness for every indication of the will of God. . . The wisdom of the man is equally evident (xxiv. 22). He brings out what would be perfectly known to the young girl as bridal gifts and offers them first before approaching the subject of his errand, or mentioning the person of his master or his master's son. We cannot fail to observe his reverence and thankfulness as he realises that his prayer has been answered, and that God has indeed guided him all the way. Not least of all is the man's intense earnestness (xxiv. 33). He would not eat or rest until he had told his errand. His master's cause must come first. . . . Again we are impressed with the combination of wisdom and faithfulness in all that the servant

says and does. He states his position at once with dignity and humility (xxiv. 34). He is loud in the praises of his master, and tells them of his errand (xxiv. 37-48), and makes the proposal, offering a definite choice to the relatives of the young woman whom he had met at the well. Soon the purpose of the servant is accomplished. He introduces Rebekah to Isaac, and retires to tell his aged master what he had done. The servant disappears from view at this point with fitness and appropriateness, but we are sure he received his 'well done' from Abram" (Griffith Thomas).

"This is one of the sweet old stories which can never grow stale. Its religious value is in the evidence of God's guidance directing the details of the common life; besides that, it takes us into the atmosphere of a beautiful relationship between master and servant and the kindly courtesies of the hospitable East" (Huntley). After the departure of Lot and until the birth of Ishmael, Eliezer was the only heir to Abram's wealth, xv. 2, yet he in no way resented the loss of that position but continued to serve Isaac as he had served Abram. Abram was living now at Hebron, xxiii. 19. Trace the route Eliezer would take to Haran, and consider how long the journey would take, a distance of nearly 500 miles. See Isaac's age at the time of his marriage, xxv. 20.

Aim of this Lesson

To impress the children with the fact that God will guide in our every day affairs.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How many people were there now in Abram's family? (Abram, Sarai, Isaac). But the next event we read of is the death of Sarai—think how lonely they must have been then. Isaac was no longer a boy—he was a man and a splendid companion for his father, but they must have missed Sarai very much.

Planning for the Future—Perhaps it was this that made Abram begin to plan for Isaac's wedding. But all the girls in that country were of a different religion and different nationality and he did not like his son to marry any of these.

If only his brother's family had not been so far away he might have found a wife for Isaac among them. (Where was his brother living?) Then he thought of a plan. Tell of the servant who had been with the camp ever since they came into this new land. Everybody had learnt to trust him thoroughly, for he was a very good man. So Abram talked the matter over with him. Read their conversation, making sure that the children understand what Eliezer was to do, xxiv. 2-8.

Going on a Journey—Describe vividly his preparations for the journey—10 camels, servants probably, presents, food—and picture the departure. Tell of the long journey taking more than a month through lonely country or amid dangers from robbers or wild beasts. On and on to the north he travelled till he knew he must be near his master's old home. And there he camped by a well.

Meeting Rebekah—Vividly picture what happened at the well that evening—the resting camels—the old man praying—the beautiful girl drawing water (xxiv. 11-16). Read his prayer, xxiv. 12-14, and his conversation with Rebekah, xxiv. 17-19, pointing out how the sign he asked for was given. Describe how she watered the camels, what he gave her, who she was, her invitation (xxiv. 20-25). Picture the old man praying again, and, as he prayed, Rebekah ran home to tell her mother the strange thing that had happened to her (xxiv. 28).

Meeting Rebekah's Family—Describe how Laban, Rebekah's brother, hurried out to meet the stranger and brought him home with him (xxiv. 29-31). Picture the scene as the old man told his errand to the family, especially bringing out how loyal he was to Abram his master, and how faithfully he discharged the duty entrusted to him (xxiv. 30-49). Imagine the excitement in the family and the conversation that followed, and tell of Rebekah's decision (xxiv. 50-58). Describe her preparations for departure and the farewells.

Isaac and Rebekah—Imagine Rebekah's thoughts and feelings on the long journey with Eliezer, and think how he would talk to her about Isaac and his master Abram and their life in the camp. Vividly picture her meeting with Isaac at the end of the journey (xxiv. 64, 65), and how she

was welcomed as his wife (xxiv. 67). We never hear of the old servant again, but we can imagine how often he would tell his friends the story of how God had led him, and others would be helped to trust in God for guidance also.

Note. This story is so well and fully told in the Bible that, by way of variety, it might be an advantage to read it this week instead of telling it. But it must be very well read—do not make the children read verses, but read it all to them as well as ever you can.

LESSON 34

ISAAC REFUSES TO QUARREL

Gen. xxvi. 12–33

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Compare Isaac's experiences in Gerar and Abram's, xx. 1, 2 ; xxvi. 6, 7 ; xxi. 25 ; xxvi. 14, 15. Thus early did the Hebrews come into conflict with the Philistines who for so many years were to be their adversaries. See on the map the places mentioned—Isaac lived first at Beer-lahai-rol far to the south, xxv. 11 ; xxiv. 62 ; xvi. 14 ; and afterwards at Beersheba, xxvi. 33, where his father had been before him, xxi. 33. Gerar was further north in the Philistine country. Isaac was much less of a nomad than Abram ; xxvi. 12 is the first allusion to agriculture.

“Isaac had none of the force of his father's personality. He was an example of that not uncommon class—a great man's son overshadowed by his father's greatness. He did not strike out for himself. There was nothing of the spirit of adventure in him. We rather think of him as colourless and neutral tinted, one fashioned by his surroundings. But he had the strength of his qualities. He excelled in the passive virtues. He was meek and gentle and our Lord set the crown on these qualities. He would have been a far bigger man had these notable excellencies been associated with courage and energy and driving power. But he gives the impression of

desiring peace at any price which, however, is manifestly better than war at the first provocation. His gentleness made Isaac great. He anticipated the rare perfection of Him who being reviled, reviled not again. We see how well he bore the pinpricks and annoyances and insults and wrongs and disappointments that came his way" (Feasey).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the attractive character of a peace-maker.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers how old Abram was when Isaac was born? (100) And when Isaac was married Abram was a very, very old man, so of course he did not live much longer.

Isaac's Wealth—Graphically describe life in Isaac's camp. He inherited all Abram's goods so was very wealthy in flocks and herds. He did not own any land but his servants took the animals all over the hills for many miles and found plenty of pasture. Rebekah was very happy in her new home and together they worshipped God as Abram had taught them to do.

Famine—But then came a year without any rain—describe the state of the country as month after month went by with no rain. What could Isaac do with so much cattle? Picture him leaving the country where he had been living and going northward into a rich and fertile land with plenty of water, but with other people also living there. Read what God said to him, xxvi. 2-5. Tell what success he had there that year in growing crops (xxvi. 12) and vividly picture his wealth (xxvi. 13, 14).

Gerar—Then a very natural thing happened—the other people began to be envious and quarrels started—But Isaac could not bear quarrelling so he moved further away—picture him doing so with his vast camp (xxvi. 17). Now he came to a place where his father had once camped and had dug some wells so as to get good water. But the silly people of the land had filled up the wells with sand, so Isaac had to dig them all over again! And as soon as Isaac had all the wells

cleared out so that he could get good water the other people began to quarrel again. Describe this (xxvi. 20) imagining how they would say, "The water is ours." What would Isaac do now? What would you have done? Isaac said, "Then if the water is yours I will go." So he went still further, right away from the wells.

More Wells—But he had to have water so his servants dug a new well in quite a new place. Now whose was this water? Had people any right to drive Isaac away this time? And yet, once more, the jealous people came and quarrelled over the water! (xxvi. 21.) Picture this strife and imagine how sad Isaac was about it. What would he do this time? He had plenty of men in his camp to fight and drive the others away—was that the best thing to do? Tell how for the third time Isaac packed up all his vast camp and went to a new place—how they dug another well, and how this time no one came to drive them away.

Friends—Then a strange thing happened. The king of the people who had been driving Isaac's men from the wells came to see him. Describe how he came in state escorted by some of his leading officers (xxvi. 26). How surprised Isaac must have been to see his enemy coming like this! Read what he said to him, xxvi. 27, and Abimelech's reply, xxvi. 28, 29. Think how glad Isaac must have been then—if he had let his servants go on quarrelling, this man would have been his enemy always, but now he honoured him and wanted to be his friend. Tell how Isaac kept them with him all night and gave a great feast in their honour to show how he welcomed them. Picture them leaving in peace next morning (xxvi. 30, 31). And the very same day Isaac's men who were digging came in and said another well was finished and they had a splendid water supply. This is a story for us to remember whenever we are tempted to quarrel with anyone.

LESSON 35

JOSEPH'S FIRST GREAT ADVENTURE

Gen. xxxvii. 1-28.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The chief event with which the rest of Genesis is concerned, namely, the migration of Israel to Egypt, displays the working out of God's purposes declared in Gen. xv. In Egypt the chosen race grew in peace from a tribe to a nation, instead of having to encounter the hostility of the Canaanites as their numbers increased and their aspirations became known. In Egypt, too, they came in contact with a highly civilised and law-abiding nation, and learnt from them much of the highest value for the future" (Dummelow).

Consider the childhood and youth of Joseph. Born in Padanaram he was early taken away from the influences of that land and lived till he was seventeen, xxxvii. 2, in Shalem, xxxiii. 18; Bethel, xxxv. 1; Bethlehem where his brother was born and his mother died, xxxv. 16-19; Hebron where his grandfather died, xxxv. 27-29. See how Jacob's sins were reproduced in his own family, xxxvii. 31-35.

"To understand Joseph's brothers aright one must remember that most of them had spent their childhood in the atmosphere of watchful suspicion between Laban and Jacob: they had had their part in the trickery of the shepherd years. Four of them were the sons of maid-servants, probably idol-worshippers. From the first Joseph, the son of the beloved Rachel, would be one apart. And when Jacob bestowed on him the long-sleeved Syrain coat, which probably gave him official standing as head of the family, their smouldering jealousy burst into organized hatred. The 'evil report,' xxxvii. 2, possibly represents part of the duty of Joseph as guardian of his father's interests" (Huntley).

Trace on the map Joseph's route from Hebron to Shechem, 50 miles, and Dothan 15 miles further, xxxvii. 12-17. The Ishmaelites and Midianites, xxxvii. 28, were desert wanderers, all descendants of Abram.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage emulation of the fine qualities shown in Joseph's character.

Story for the Class

Introduction—About what two men have we already heard from the book of Genesis? (Abram and Isaac). Now we are to hear about Isaac's grand-children.

The Big Family—He had many grand-children for one of his sons had twelve children! Is there anyone here belonging to a family as big as that? Our story is about the youngest but one, Joseph. By the time he was born some of the older ones were nearly grown up, and they were not at all nice men. Joseph was quite the nicest of the boys and while he was still very young his father made him the head of the family and gave him a special coat. Describe this. Of course this made the others more jealous than ever, but they were not good men, so what else could their father do?

The Dreams—Tell how Joseph had a dream; read what he told his brothers, xxxvii. 7, and what they replied, xxxvii. 8. Tell his second dream, and how his father rebuked him (xxxvii. 9, 10). May be Joseph was a little proud of his dreams, and that helped to make his brothers angry.

The Long Journey—Once Joseph's brothers had gone a long way from home with their sheep to get better pasture. They must have been gone for several weeks and their father was anxious to know how they were getting on. Explain that they had no post offices in those days so it was no good writing letters. The only way to find out about them was to send someone, and Joseph was the one who could best be spared. He was seventeen years old then so he was able to look after himself, but it would not be very nice to go so far all alone. But he made no objection when his father told him to go. Imagine how he went the first fifty miles to Shechem—did he find other travellers going the same way? How many days did it take? Of course he walked all the way—how would you like to go such a long journey? And at the end he found his brothers had left that place! Describe how he enquired of other people (xxxvii. 15-17) and tell what

he heard. Fifteen miles more to go—think what he felt like then! But he was brave as well as obedient, so on he went, and at last found them.

The Tragic End.—How would any of your brothers greet you at the end of a journey like that? But that was not how Joseph's brothers welcomed him. Vividly tell what they did (xxxvii. 23, 24). Think how he cried and begged for mercy, but they only mocked him (xlii. 21), and sat down alongside to eat their food (xxxvii. 25). Suddenly they saw, coming along the valley below them a big company of people. Read the evil thought which came into their minds, xxxvii. 26, 27, and describe vividly how they carried it out (xxxvii. 28). So poor Joseph was carried away by these strangers into a strange land. Did he wish then that he had not obeyed his father? Perhaps; yet in his heart he was satisfied that he had done right. And today he would tell us, "Yes, it is always good to be obedient because things come out right in the end." And we shall hear the rest of the story in the next few weeks.

LESSON 36

JOSEPH'S RISE AND FALL

Gen. xxxix. 1-xl. 23

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Trace on the map the road from Dothan through the Vale of Sharon and down by the sea coast. Perhaps there were other slaves in the band, some perhaps fainting by the way and left to die. Imagine the change of scene after the long desert road as they entered Egypt—rich cornlands, great cities, gangs of slaves dragging enormous stones for building. And as they entered the city of their destination, think how the great streets, the palaces and mansions, would strike a boy who had lived in tents . . . Joseph's lot was by no means the worst that could have happened. His new master



AN EGYPTIAN PAINTING

was Potiphar, the Superintendent of police, and apparently a worthy man . . . It seemed that his position was thoroughly secure. How little we can judge by appearances. Consider the great test and fierce temptation that suddenly befell the young man. Note especially the words 'how can I . . . sin against God.' This is the key to Joseph's life. And see how he called the sin by its right name, 'this great wickedness.' It is always a bad sign when we find smooth and soft words to describe evil. As he rushed forth from the woman's presence he must have known that all his prosperity was at an end. Indeed the natural thing now to expect was immediate death at the hand of Potiphar. But Potiphar evidently believed in Joseph more than in his own wife, though he had to make a show of punishing him by sending him to prison . . . Here he would have a measure of freedom; probably a courtyard to walk in, and the oppor-

tunity of mixing with men of position and culture. Do we not see God's guiding hand? The country boy had already in Potiphar's household received a great deal of education, and now in the seclusion of his prison this would be likely to continue. But Joseph would hardly recognize this. At first surely he must have been tempted to wonder whether God had forgotten him and whether it paid to be faithful. He, however, was not the sort of man to despond and we see his fine character once more winning respect. In those days the jailor might do very much as he liked with his prisoners so long as they did not escape; there were no rules for him. And so we find Joseph made under-jailor while still a prisoner himself" (*Bible Course for High Schools*).

This stage of Joseph's life comprised thirteen years, xli. 46; of these ten must have been spent in Potiphar's house and the remainder in prison, xli. 1. Of all Old Testament characters he comes nearest to the Christian ideal of a man of God. Note the importance attached to dreams at this period. The word Pharaoh is not the name of a particular king, but the title of all Egyptian kings.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage faithfulness to duty.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Before Joseph's brothers sold him they had talked of killing him—which do you think would be worse, to be killed or sold?

Sold—Suggest incidents of the long, weary march into Egypt. Perhaps there were other slaves in the band, some maybe fainting by the way and left to die. But Joseph was strong and healthy and managed the journey alright. But another terrible experience was before him. Describe the terrors of the slave market where he was exposed for sale along with hundreds of others. Would-be purchasers came and examined each one just as now-a-days we might see people examining dogs or horses. Picture the steward of some great man examining Joseph, liking him, buying him and taking him away to his master.

Promoted—Tell who Joseph's new master was and imagine the sort of work a slave boy would be given to do in his house. Joseph did not mind how menial the task that was given him, he did it as well as ever he could. Of course the result was that he had more important work given him, and gradually more and more responsibility. Graphically picture his steady promotion for ten years, till he was in charge of all his master's establishment. How surprised his father would have been to see him then!

Imprisoned—But another bad experience was in store for poor Joseph. One day his mistress told a lie about him to her husband, and, without waiting to find out if it was true, he sent his faithful servant to prison! Which do you think was worse—being sold or sent to prison? There Joseph was given work to do again—sweeping very likely and such jobs as that—and again he always did his work so well that the jailor noticed him and began giving more responsible tasks to him. Picture his promotion again and tell of his final position in the prison. Point out that no matter what catastrophe befell him Joseph was always faithful, and sooner or later he was rewarded for it.

Forgotten—Tell of Joseph's fellow-prisoners (xl. 1-4). One night they both dreamed, and when Joseph came in to them in the morning they looked terribly sad. If the children can read well enough let them read verse by verse the conversation that followed, xl. 7-19. Read it through to them if they cannot read easily. Vividly describe the fulfilment of the two dreams (xl. 20-22). Tell how Joseph was forgotten and left still in prison (xl. 23). It looked as though, no matter how good and faithful he was, bad things always happened to him. But he knew that the worst thing that could happen would be for him to get careless or sulky, so he still did his best and was rewarded by a clear conscience for he knew God was pleased with him.

LESSON 37

JOSEPH BECOMES CHIEF RULER

Gen. xli. 1-49

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"It is believed that a dynasty of Asiatic conquerors known as the Hyksos or Shepherd kings were now in power in Egypt. Their rule lasted for 500 years, until 1,700 or 1,600 B.C., when a Nubian dynasty from Thebes expelled the invaders. The court was at Zoan on the eastern frontier of Egypt. The elevation of Joseph to an almost royal position, and the welcome extended to his kinsmen, were natural at the hands of a dynasty who were Asiatic like himself, but very improbable had a native dynasty who hated foreigners been in power.

"As is generally known, the fertility of Egypt depends entirely upon the amount of water which overflows the banks when the Nile is at its highest. Without that river the land would be a desert, the rainfall being extremely slight. In recent years great improvements have been made for maintaining the water at a normal height always. Large 'barrages' or dams have been erected at Assouan, by the island of Philae, for this purpose

"The magicians were the literary class of Egypt, writing the hieroglyphics or sacred writings, and learned in the interpretation of dreams and astrology. They attended at the Court of the Pharaohs, and their duty was 'to guide every act of the king's life and to interpret the will of the gods as shown in visions, omens or signs in the heavens. They did not affect to speak by direct inspiration in giving their interpretations, but confined themselves to consulting the holy books and to performing magical rites'

"The Hebrews regarded their beard with peculiar pride, cultivated it with care, touched it at supplications, often swore by it, and deemed its mutilation an extreme ignominy; hence, in mourning, they shaved their beards and hair. The Egyptians, on the other hand never allowed the hair to grow

unless they were in mourning or prisoners or belonged to the poorer classes. To be shaved was regarded as essential to ceremonial purity, as well as to cleanliness. . . .

“Joseph’s suggestion was that a fifth part of the corn crop should be required of the people for the next seven years to be stored up by the government ; this would keep a quantity in the country which would otherwise have been sold to other lands. The corn tax was already an important part of Egyptian revenue, and its increase in years of such abundant plenty would be no hardship ” (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To show that God rewards fidelity.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the title of the king of Egypt ? (Pharaoh.) He lived in a very fine palace decorated with gay-coloured paintings all over the walls, and with many statues and carvings.

Pharaoh’s Dreams—One night he had two strange dreams—tell these vividly (xli. 1-7). If we dreamed funny things like that we should laugh at them, but Pharaoh was very troubled—they seemed like a message from God that he could not understand. So he called in his wise men and told them his dreams and asked for an explanation. Some of them were, perhaps, inclined to laugh, but the king was very serious about the matter. Imagine them talking together, but quite failing to find any explanation of the dreams (xli. 8).

The Forgotten Prisoner—Suddenly the king’s chief butler came in and, saluting very humbly, asked if he might speak. Read what he said, xli. 9-13. Do the children remember who this was ? Vividly describe how a message was at once sent to the prison and imagine Joseph’s excitement and joy as he hastily prepared himself to go into the king’s presence. Describe in detail how he got ready (xli. 14). Read what the king said and Joseph’s answer, xli. 15, 16. Note how careful Joseph was to attribute the power to God and not to himself. Then the king again told his strange dreams.

The Interpretation—Read Joseph's interpretation of them xli. 25-32. Imagine the consternation of all the courtiers—seven years of famine. Think what that would mean in your district. Tell how the king and his officers must have begun to discuss the terrible prospect and what they could do in the face of such a calamity. Then Joseph spoke again—tell what he suggested (xli. 33-36). Pharaoh saw at once that that was just the thing to do—but what man could he choose?

The Promotion—Read what he said to the officers, xli. 38, and to Joseph, xli. 39, 40. What a change for Joseph—that morning he had waked up a prisoner and now he was the ruler of all that country! Describe vividly his investiture (xli. 42, 43). Very briefly tell how he set about collecting grain during the seven years of plenty (xli. 46-49). So now all the nation discovered that Joseph was trustworthy and faithful; and Joseph realized that God had not forgotten him, but had been testing and preparing him for a great work. Remember this when you are tempted to be careless about your work.

LESSON 38

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Gen. xliii. 1-34; xliv. 1-34; xlv. 1-28.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Study the lesson round the following subjects:

1. *The Power of a past Sin*—Joseph's brothers had never been free from consciousness of their sin through twenty years. It kept them from coming to Egypt till Jacob insisted; the Egyptian prison was at once to them retribution for Joseph's unforgotten anguish, xlii. 21, 22; God's hand was in the return of their money, xlii. 28; the shame of their discovery was the 'finding of their iniquity,' xliv. 16; fear was not killed even at Joseph's forgiveness, xlv. 3, etc; it lived to the day of Jacob's death, l. 15.

2. *Joseph's Purpose in his Treatment of his Brothers*—Their attitude towards Benjamin was to be made the test of their repentance. Any sign of jealousy towards him at the feast, or of willingness to see him enslaved would have proved them still oppressors. Study the parts played by Reuben and Judah. Judah's speech, xliv. 18-34, is one of the noblest in the Bible.

3. *The Out-Working of God's Plan*—For over twenty years Joseph had trusted God in the dark. But from the moment when he recognized the fulfilment of his youthful dreams, as his brothers bowed before him, it was given to him to see the purpose behind all his experiences. The splendid magnanimity of his forgiveness had its root in his recognition of the hand of God over-ruling wrong for right. 'Not you, but God' expressed both faith and vision.

4. *Points to Note*—(a) The real danger of foreign spies in such a time of weakness. (b) Means of carriage—asses, sacks, baggage-waggons (drawn by asses?) etc. (c) The money used was probably in bars or rings of fixed weight; see 'bundles of money.' (d) Paintings show the customs observed at Joseph's feast—the separate tables, food distributed by the master, etc" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the beauty of forgiveness.

Story for the Class

Introduction—When Joseph interpreted the king's dreams how many years did he say there would be before the famine? And how many years of famine? Imagine how terrible that would be if it happened in India! And this famine was not only in Egypt but in the country where Joseph's father lived also. What country was that?

The First Journey—Telling the story from the standpoint of Joseph's brothers, imagine the condition of Canaan during the first two years of famine. Then tell of Jacob's command to his sons and describe the ten men starting away (xlii. 1-4). Tell of their asses and the sacks for corn and the long journey taking not less than twelve or fourteen days. Vividly

picture their meeting with the great Governor and humbly bowing before him (xlii. 6). It was their brother Joseph to whom they were bowing but they never for a minute guessed it! Think how he would remember that old dream of his when he saw them bowing! See that the children realize that these men were absolutely in Joseph's power. How would he pay them out for their treatment of him? Tell of Joseph's gruff manner and of their conversation (xlii. 7-16), and picture the ten men put into prison (xlii. 17). Then tell of Joseph's apparent change of plan (xlii. 18-20). Read xlii. 21, and show how this reveals the men's guilty consciences. Picture Simeon being taken back to prison while the rest started away. Briefly tell of the discovery on the way and of their arrival at home (xlii. 38).

The Second Journey—How glad all their children were to have more food! But soon it got less and less and still the famine continued. What was to be done? Tell of the conversation between Jacob and his sons (xliii. 3-14), helping the children to feel the old man's grief and anxiety and the brothers' sense of guilt and embarrassment. Vividly picture their arrival in Egypt—being taken into Joseph's house—consulting with his servant—getting ready to meet the great man—their interview with Joseph (xliii. 15-34). Why did not Joseph tell who he was? Was he getting some terrible punishment ready for them? Explain that he wanted to find out how they treated Benjamin—whether they were unkind to him as they used to be to Joseph himself. Now describe his plan to find this out. Picture the start home of the eleven men—the pursuit—the search—the return (xliv. 1-15). Tell with deep feeling the gist of what Judah said (xliv. 16-34). So the men were quite changed and were kind to Benjamin.

Reunion—Tell the command Joseph now gave and picture him left alone with his brothers (xlv. 1). Vividly describe the scene that followed (xlv. 2, 3), and read what Joseph said, xlv. 4-13. Help the children to realize the magnanimity of Joseph's forgiveness. Imagine all the things they would talk about then. Once more picture their start, journey and arrival at home. Tell of Jacob's incredulity—amazement—joy (xlv. 26-28). And so everybody was happy again—and

perhaps Joseph was the happiest of all because he had done such a noble thing in forgiving those who had so sinned against him.

LESSON 39

MOSES TRAINED FOR A GREAT TASK

Exod. i. 8-14 ; ii. 1-15

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"It is hoped that during this series a systematic study of the Book of Exodus may be made by the teachers. As a preliminary to this all should read the book carefully through and note the natural sections into which it falls . . . (Consider) the length of Israel's stay in Egypt. The 'four hundred years' of Gen. xv. 13 may include the sojourning of Abraham and Jacob, as well as the time in Egypt. The 'fourth generation' of Gen. xv. 16 corresponds with the genealogy of Moses in Ex. vi. 16-20, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses, and the time covered could scarcely have been more than two hundred years. Joseph lived seventy years after his people came ; Moses was eighty at the deliverance. This leaves fifty years for the revolution and change of dynasty and policy which caused the oppression" (Huntley).

The history of the period is summed up in Ex. i. 7, 8. Consider the implications of i. 7. The new king was the first of a new dynasty hence his total ignorance of even so important a person as Joseph. Note the three stages of the oppression in i. 11, 16, 22. Aaron being only three years older than Moses, vii. 7, must have also been in danger. The fact that the baby was hidden right at the Princess's bathing place may indicate a definite hope that she would save him. Acts vii. 22 sums up Moses' education in Egypt. Was the killing of the Egyptian a prearranged signal that Moses was ready to deliver the people, Acts vii. 24, 25 ?

Aim of this Lesson

To show the greatness of Moses' choice.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the name of the part of Egypt where Jacob and his sons were allowed to live? (Goshen.) Was it a good or a bad place? It was so good that they soon became quite prosperous. Picture their life in Goshen first as shepherds and cultivators.

Prosperity—By the time Joseph died his sons and nephews and their children were becoming very rich people and they were increasing so rapidly that there was not room for all of them in that one little district. But they were clever people and soon learnt all about Egyptian life and how to work in many ways. Picture them as the years went by spreading into other parts of the land and always securing high positions. Some became bankers or merchants or even Government officers (i. 7). Perhaps for a hundred years this went on and the people became more and more wealthy and prosperous. What would Jacob have thought if he could have seen them then?

Adversity—But then a change came. Imagine the terrors of war—victory for the invaders—a change of king. As the new king took possession of the country he found these foreigners everywhere in high position. Read what he said, i. 9, 10. Tell of his first scheme to crush these people, and its result (i. 11–14). Tell of his second scheme and how that also was thwarted (i. 15–17). Finally, as his other plans had failed he ordered that every Israelite boy should be drowned in the river (i. 22). Think how many sad homes there must have been amongst them then!

Prosperity—But there was one family where the mother determined to try and save her boys. She had kept one safe for three years and then another was born and for three months she managed to keep him safe too with the help of their big sister. Imagine the difficulty and terror of those months in a tiny coolie's house with Egyptian task-masters often passing by, and think how they prayed God to help them. Now let the children tell how the baby was saved—they will no doubt have heard the story already. Perhaps his mother said, "I know what I will do! The king has said we are to put our babies in the river—I will put mine there, but

I will put a boat under him and take him to the Princess's bathing place. If she sees him surely she will save him!" Think how the boat was made, the work being done in secret, and then imagine the sad little party going to the river one morning early. Let the children recall in detail all that happened there (ii. 4-9). What name did the Princess give to the baby? Now it was quite safe for him to go home with his mother and for some months longer they kept him there. But when he was still quite a little boy he went to live in the palace with the grand Princess. Do you think his mother went with him as his nurse? What sort of things would he have to play with? Who would be his playmates? Of course he soon had to go to school and learn all the lessons the Egyptian Princes had to learn. Suggest what some of these were—reading, writing, arithmetic, astronomy, laws, architecture, poetry, history, music. And Moses was very clever and learnt as quickly as any of the little Princes. They had to learn about the army, too, and fighting, and as they got older perhaps they had to go out and help fight against the country's enemies. And in all these things Moses showed himself brave and quick and clever. How proud the Princess must have been, and his mother and father! Did not his mother often think, "When he grows up he will be a great man in the country and will be able to help all our people." And Moses, too, wanted to do so, but no chance came till he was forty years old.

Adversity—Vividly picture him visiting the brickfields where the Israelites were working. He of course was dressed like a Prince—they like coolies. Describe the sort of things he saw and imagine his feelings. Tell the tragic climax (ii. 11, 12). Do the children think he did right or was there any better thing he could have done? Would the king have listened if he had taken a petition to him? Describe what happened the next day (ii. 13) and read what the man replied, ii. 14. Help the children to see Moses' dilemma—certainly the Egyptians would be angry with him and his own people did not trust him (Acts vii. 25). What could he do? Perhaps if he went and asked the king's pardon it would be granted for he was a great and important person. But if he did that it would be giving up the cause of his oppressed people. No.

he would not go to the king! But since his own people refused him the only thing for him to do was to flee for his life to another country. Think how sad and disappointed he must have been, yet in his heart he was satisfied because he had done right in standing up for the oppressed. Read Heb. xi. 24-27.

LESSON 40

MOSES' GREAT CALL

Exodus ii. 16-25 ; iii. 1-17.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"It is difficult to realize that this section covers a period of forty years. At the time of Moses' flight there would still be a generation of Israelites who remembered the days of their prosperity and whose spirit was not broken by oppression. But now there was a generation of slaves, whose fathers were slaves, and who knew that never again could Egypt be anything to them but the 'iron furnace'. . . . Consider the effect of his exile on Moses. Humanly speaking his brilliant education seemed wasted; in this day of restless activity it would be considered folly to keep a great leader chafing in solitude till old age had come. Yet it was necessary that the self-confidence which might have led to rash planning and disaster in the task before him should be utterly removed; that he might see in truer proportion the magnitude of the task, and so realize that nothing short of Divine power was equal to its fulfilment. Compare the sense of unfitness experienced by Gideon, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah. . . .

"Every Old Testament instance of God's direct speech to man is of vital importance to us and not one includes a more full revelation of God in His being and His way than this. What is the last recorded communication of God with man? See Gen. xlv. 3. Over two hundred years had passed, and now He spoke again. Write out the essentials of His message. (a) The unchanging God of the promises: (b) The God

who sees and delivers: (c) The God who chooses and fits. His own instruments. . .

"Trace the four-fold difficulty of Moses and its corresponding solution:

'Who am I?' — 'I will be with thee.'

'Who art Thou?' — The name revealed.

'They will not believe' — Signs granted.

'I am not eloquent' — 'I will teach thee.'

Even then Moses begged that another might be sent in his place (iv. 13), and in wonderful grace Aaron was given to be his companion. . . .

"A burning bush was possibly not an uncommon sight in the fierce heat of noonday. This one, unconsumed, was the sign which prepared Moses for the unexpected call. . . . 'The route or Moses' flight led across Sinai, where the Egyptians had mining stations. At the head of the Gulf of Akaba he would turn southwards to avoid the routes of trade or war. The people of Midian were descendants of Abraham through Keturah, living a primitive life, with some knowledge of Abraham's God, but no great promises as Israel had. Look up other references to Jethro, Raguel or Hobab. Probably Hobab was the brother-in-law of Moses (the same word stands for any relation by marriage)'" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show some of the qualities required in a great leader.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children discuss what would be Moses' chief difficulties in this new land for the first week or so. Remember he had been brought up as a Prince—could he live like a Prince here? What would he eat? Where would he sleep? Did he want to go back? No, he could not go back without being untrue to his own people.

New Friends—So on he wandered into this wild unknown land. One day he came to a place that was far better than most of the country he had been wandering in. There was a well of water there (ii. 15) and that meant that

of course there were trees, date palms probably, and grass, and perhaps a little patch of corn. Think how gladly he sat down in the shade to rest and think! But he was not long left alone—vividly picture the seven girls coming with their flocks of sheep and drawing water for them (ii. 16). Very graphically tell how Moses helped them (ii. 17). How surprised they all must have been to see one man able to drive away so many. Point out that it was the same chivalry in Moses that made him do this as made him kill the Egyptian—he was ready to help anyone who was oppressed. Very happy and excited the girls hurried away with their sheep. But very soon some of them were back again. Describe the scene as they gave their father's message—"Our father is very grateful to you and asks you to come and eat with him." Imagine their conversation as they walked back together—the questions Moses asked—how the girls told about their father. Picture the meeting of the two men.

New Work—Think how soon Moses felt at home amongst his new friends. The father was so thankful for the help given to his girls that he asked Moses to stay, and Moses was so thankful for a home that he gladly stayed and began learning to be a shepherd. What a change for him! Think how every day he helped the girls and they taught him about the work. He was never proud and refused to do the menial work, but became a shepherd like the people he lived with, and we can imagine that after that he always did the difficult things so that the girls never again had to face those rough, rude shepherds from the other tribe. Tell of Moses' marriage (ii. 21). Do the children remember how old Moses was when he ran away from Egypt? (40) And now another forty years went by while he was a shepherd. Is there anyone in your village who is eighty years old? Moses was quite content in this new country but he never forgot his own people in Egypt and must often have wondered how they fared.

A New Call—And then one day he had a wonderful experience. Describe this very fully. He was doing his ordinary every-day work of looking after sheep in that hot, dusty land. He was in a very wild part where there is a high mountain when one day he saw a wonderful sight. It was

just an ordinary desert thorn bush which had caught fire, but as he watched he noticed that the fire did not burn it up at all, so he went nearer to see what strange sort of fire this could be. Read iii. 3. Suddenly he heard his name called (iii. 4) and then a voice went on speaking. Read iii. 5, 6. *God* was speaking to him! Let the children read in turn, quietly and reverently iii. 7-10. What a wonderful message—that was just what Moses had wanted to do forty years ago. What did he feel about it now? Read iii. 11. Point out the change in Moses—all his self-confidence gone, only humility now. He had been so long away from Egypt that he knew he would feel shy and awkward there now. Read God's promise, iii. 12. Picture Moses returning to his home and talking over God's call with his father-in-law (iv. 18). Describe his start back to Egypt (iv. 20). He had never changed his mind all these forty years and was still anxious to help his people, but this time he waited for God to call and then he started at once to go back. Read again Heb. xi. 24-27.

LESSON 41

THE DELIVERER OF ISRAEL

Exod. xii. 29-41; xiii. 20-xiv. 31.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The lessons selected for the children necessarily leave large gaps in the history, and the teacher should take the opportunity the course affords of reading the intervening sections. "Study the whole passage v-xii, as the contest between two outstanding personalities; the selfish stubbornness of Pharaoh is well matched in the religious doggedness of the champion of the Hebrews. Only when a series of calamities had destroyed the morale of the Egyptians and discredited their king were the slaves allowed to go free—as soon as their worth was realized pursuit began. Note the

courageous leadership of Moses, who from the beginning had to face the grumbling and rebellion of his own people. Under divine guidance his choice of the south road was the prelude to a second and permanent deliverance" (Hayes).

"During probably not more than one year, a series of unprecedented disasters came upon Egypt. Their nature and extent were such that without any interpreter they would have been attributed to the gods of river or animal life, but combined as they were with the demands and warnings and increased defiance of Jehovah, they constituted the irresistible answer to Pharaoh's first 'Who is Jehovah? . . . I know not Jehovah' (v. 2). Make a list of such phrases as, 'That thou mayest know,' etc. . . .

"Study the passover as the birthday of Israel as a nation. Trace the journey—draw a map of the route. Note evidences of a well-organized system of communication among the scattered Israelites. Picture the night movement to one centre, Rameses, then the concentrated march to Succoth, the frontier enclosure. Etham, possibly a single outpost on the desert border was the only land-escape from Egypt. Every step southwards was sufficiently hopeless. Collect all references to the 'Cloud.' It was the revealed presence of the 'Angel of Jehovah' (xiv. 19). . . .

"The great importance of this lesson springs not only from its central place in Israel's history, but from its typical place in Christian doctrine, embodied in 1 Cor. v. 7b: '*Christ our Passover is slain for us.*' A true sense of the mysterious spiritual significance will help the teacher better to deal with the child's portion—the historical fact" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show God's power triumphing over difficulties.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall what God said to Moses. (iii. 10). Would this be easy?

The Plagues—Describe the two old men, Moses and Aaron, going before the king and making their request, and

tell with vigour what Pharaoh said (v. 2). Tell very briefly but dramatically of the plagues—blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease amongst the animals, boils on the people, hail, locusts, darkness, death of the first-born. Do not spend much time over this part of the lesson, but help the children to feel the thrill and anxiety of the contest. Why would not Pharaoh let them go? (He wanted them to do hard work for him.) Now we shall hear how the long fight ended.

The Feast—When God gave Moses the message for Pharaoh saying that all their first-born children would die if they did not let the Israelites go, at the same time He sent a message to the Israelites themselves. Briefly tell what this message was (xii. 3-13), and picture each family making its preparation. For seven days they were to eat something like chappatties and on the last day they were to kill and eat a lamb. Think how anxious every eldest son and daughter would be on that last night to have the mark on the outside of the house—describe how the mark was made and how careful they were not to go out all night (xii. 22). It was on that very night that someone died in every Egyptian home! Tell the message which Pharaoh sent to Moses next morning (xii. 31-33).

The Departure—Now picture the preparations of the Israelites—packing up their household goods (xii. 34)—receiving gifts from the Egyptians (xii. 35, 36, perhaps they looked upon these gifts as payment for some of the work they had been doing for so long for very little pay). Imagine the size of the crowd that started away (xii. 37, 38) and vividly picture how they were urged, almost driven away by the Egyptians. They had no time to cook a meal till they had got right away from all Egyptian houses out into the desert. Tell how they hurried away southward with nothing but sandy desert before them and the sea on the east—then picture them camping for the night. Tell what God gave to guide them (xiii. 21, 22)—this bright shining cloud was really God's own presence amongst them—think how safe they felt when they looked at it.

The Pursuit—How many days they spent wandering and camping in this desert we do not know, but one morning a terrible sight greeted them. Describe what they saw (xiv. 10).

Read what they said to Moses and his reply, xiv. 11-14. Picture Moses going away to pray to God about it and read xiv. 15. But how could they go forward? There were rough, sandy mountains on the west and these came closer and closer to the sea on the east till there was no room in between them, and the people were caught in this narrow point of sandy desert as in a trap. But now Moses gave God's message to the people—"Go forward." Picture them almost in a state of panic gathering up their goods again.

The Crossing—Then Moses started the march again with his face towards the sea—how surprised the people must have been to see this. Tell what became of the bright cloud (xiv. 19). Vividly describe what Moses did when they came to the water's edge and tell of the tremendous wind that blew (xiv. 21). Have the children ever seen the water in a tank blown into waves by the wind? That was what happened there only the wind was so strong that it blew the water right back so that the people could walk across on dry land where the water had been. Think how hard it would be walking in such a wind and how rough and slippery the path would be. They knew their enemies were following them but when they looked back they could only see their beautiful cloud which gave enough light to show them where to walk.

The Morning—All night long they hurried across the sea in this way and as morning began to dawn the first of them had reached the other side—by sunrise they were all resting on the dry bank. Tell what they saw as they looked back (xiv. 23-25). Describe what Moses did and the result (xiv. 27, 28). Read impressively, xiv. 30, 31.

LESSON 42

THROUGH WILDERNESS PERILS

Exod. xv. 22—xvi. 15; xvii. 1-7

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

See the summary of Israel's wanderings, Num. xxxiii. To-day's lesson is included in verses 8-14. Find on the map all the places mentioned, considering the events which



MOUNT SINAI

happened at each. Three days' journey southward brought them to Marah where the water was bitter. At Elim, the next halt, xv. 27, they stayed for about three weeks, Num. xxxiii. 3 and Ex. xvi. 1. The Wilderness of Sin, where the miraculous supply of food was begun, lies between the Red Sea and the mountains of Sinai. From there the people turned eastward amongst the barren, rocky hills of the Peninsula, camping first at Rephidim, where was no water supply and where they had to fight the Amalekites, their first experience of battle, xvii. 8-13. It was there that Moses' wife rejoined him and his father-in-law visited him, xviii.

"Study carefully the 'statute' (that is the Divine principle revealed) and the 'ordinance' (the corresponding human duty), xv. 25, 26. This was made before the formulation of the Law of Sinai, and suggests a much more ancient code, probably transmitted from Abraham (see Gen. xviii. 19 and xxvi. 5) . . . Freedom from disease was not to be a miraculous 'reward' for keeping God's laws, but the inevitable result of

obedience to the law of purity. Search other references to the healing power of God . . . The record of the Sabbath supply does not belong to the story for the children, but is of interest as the earliest Bible intimation of the keeping of a Sabbath. Note how the people apparently did not know its significance, xvi. 22-29. We know the seventh day was 'sacred' in Babylonia in Abraham's day. His descendants had probably almost lost it in Egypt. Now its keeping became the distinguishing mark of the Jewish nation " (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show God's care for everyday needs.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What had God given to guide the people when they came out of Egypt? (The bright cloud.)

Marah—Now as soon as the people were safely over the sea and there was no more chance of the Egyptians following them, this cloud turned away southward, and led the people down near the sea coast for three days. Imagine their joy at being free and having no hard work to do. They were in very barren, desolate wilderness, but even this country must have looked beautiful when they had so long been used to the brick-fields of Egypt. Think how they carried food and water with them—cooked by the way—slept on the sand at night. But by the end of the third day their water was almost gone, so they were very glad next day to come to a place where there was plenty of water. But, alas, it was bad water (xv. 23). Tell of their grumbling and how the water was made good (xv. 24, 25).

Elim—Very soon they started on again, still southward, till they saw ahead of them a grove of palm trees. Think how cheered they were by that for there must be plenty of water there. Tell what they found (xv. 27), and how they stayed quite a long time (xvi. 1). Imagine how they spent their time resting, washing and mending their clothes, arranging their bundles which had been so hastily packed when they were starting. They must have long remembered Elim as the best place they had ever been in.

The Wilderness of Sin—After awhile the cloud began to move again so all was hurry and bustle as the camp was packed up, and then the palm trees were left behind. And now a new trouble arose. Imagine the difficulty of getting food—even at Elim there was no bazaar and now they were once more out in the sandy desert. Read what the people said, xvi. 3. Already they had quite forgotten all the sorrow they had in Egypt—and they seem to have forgotten the wonderful way in which God had helped them to escape, for if they had remembered that surely they would have prayed to Him to help them now. But it was only Moses who thought of praying. Picture the people all gathering together, probably by Moses' tent, and read what he said to them after praying, xvi. 6-8. Describe what they saw as they looked at their cloud (xvi. 10), probably some quite unusual brightness, and then God spoke. Read His words, xvi. 12. Tell in detail how the people were fed by quails each evening (xvi. 13), and by manna in the morning (xvi. 13-21). How thankful they must have been and how ashamed of the way they had grumbled! And they found that the food was not only just there, but as the cloud led them on again they found it in every place.

Rephidim—But now they had turned right away from the sea and were in amongst high, rugged, rocky hills. Describe the new difficulty at Rephidim (xvii. 1). Read xvii. 2, 3, and picture Moses in his distress going away to pray (xvii. 4). Vividly describe how he came back to the people, what he did to the rock, how the water came (xvii. 5, 6). Surely now the people did believe that God cared for them and would look after all their needs. And do we also believe it?

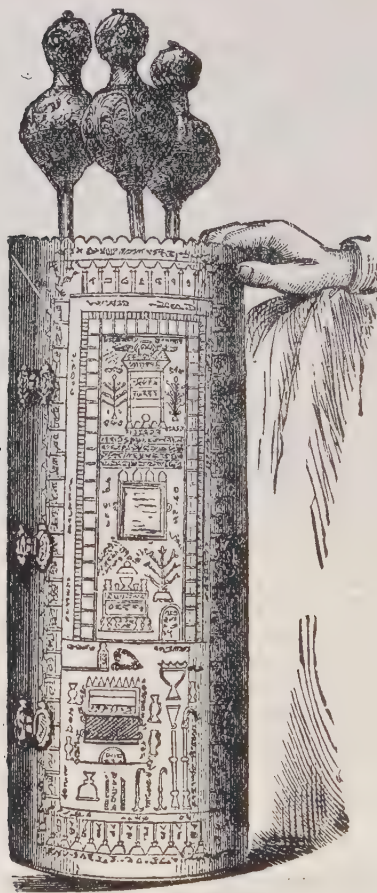
LESSON 43

THE GIVING OF THE LAW

Exod. xix. ; xx. 1-21 ; xxiv. 1-12 ; xxxii. ; xxxiv. 1-9, 29-35

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Where the lesson material is so full, the most that can be done here is to suggest some method by which teachers may obtain a clear grasp of its plan.



THE ROLL OF THE LAW

Let each teacher read the entire section carefully, making note of difficulties and forming an outline. The following outline will help :

- (a) Chap. xix. 3-9—Preliminary ; the promise of grace.
- (b) Chap. xix. 10-15—Preparation by cleansing.

(c) Chaps. xix. 16-xx. 21—The great manifestation and utterance of the 'ten words.' Read Deut. v, and note specially verses 22-27. The people themselves heard and understood the great Law.

(d) Chaps. xxi., xxii., and xxiii—The judgements declared. These were the *application of the law* to local and temporary circumstances, and constituted the nation in righteousness with regard to human relationship, property, administration of justice, and worship. Sections of these were amplified in Leviticus and Deuteronomy preparatory to the entering of the land.

(e) Chap. xxiv—The Book of the Covenant written and ratified by blood. By this solemn Covenant Israel was forever sealed as the people of God. The elders' vision and sacramental meal on the mountain was God's answer to the blood.

(f) Chaps. xxv-xxxi—The pattern of the Tabernacle revealed and the 'ten words' graven in stone.

(g) Chap. xxxii—The apostasy. How could the people immediately disobey the First Commandment? They deceived themselves and called the idol by the name of Jehovah, but the evil at once manifested itself in their abandonment and excess. Study Moses as mediator, both here and in chaps. xxxiii, xxxiv.

(h) Chap. xxxiv—The second forty days and the 'veiled' face. Read 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Study carefully the 'ten words'. Is there any question of moral or religious truth not included? (This and the story following adapted from E. Huntley.)

Aim of this Lesson

To create reverence for God's Law.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that for forty years Moses had looked after sheep. Read iii. 12, and remind the children that that was said to Moses when he was still minding the sheep.

1. How Moses would remember that promise now as he

led his great host of people to the "Mount of God." Picture the encampment; now the people had food, water, rest; what more did they need? What has our Government to provide beside all these? Tell of the first attempt at law when the people brought difficulties to Moses and he judged according to the best laws of Egypt (xviii. 13). But now God would have His people linked to Himself by His own righteous laws. But first they should be shown that it is a joyous thing to be the people of God. So He called Moses into the Mount and gave him a wonderful message. Read xix. 3-6, and the people's answer, xix. 8. Tell of the three solemn days of cleansing (xix. 9-13).

2. How could God make this people know Himself? Describe what happened on the third day (xix. 16-20). Can we think what the great cloud and storm told to the people? What the fire? But the *Voice* told most: "I am Jehovah . . . who brought thee . . . out of the house of bondage." And after that the ten great commands were given. Let the children read these and think which four are about God and His worship. Why do these come first? Which is the first of those that tell us how we ought to treat other people? Why? Which tell of the things that belong to others? But which goes right into our *thoughts*, that they may be clean? In all that crowd was there one who could say, "I have kept all the will of God"? So they feared to listen any longer—read what they said, xx. 19, 20.

3. If you were to look into a book of laws you would find it very long and dry, so at first God only gave Moses those laws the people could easily understand—about servants and cattle and the poor fatherless children. And when he came down Moses wrote all those laws in a book. But the ten *great* laws were not yet written. Describe carefully the scene when the book was read and the blood sprinkled as a sign that these were now the people under God's law (xxiv. 4-8). Tell how the elders saw a wonderful vision and sat down like accepted guests at a feast (xxiv. 9-11).

4. The message of the 40 days can only be given as God showing to Moses a wonderful way by which the humblest of His people could meet with Him and be His guest without fear (xxiv. 12-18). And the ten great "words"

wondrously written on stone, were to be the very centre of that worship.

5. At the end of the 40 days God told Moses to go down again quickly to the people at the foot of the mountain—vividly describe what he saw when he reached the camp (xxxii. 6). If the children already know that story let them tell it, but do not spend very long over it. Help the children to understand the people's self-deception. "This will remind us of Jehovah," and yet they had seen His light and heard His voice! The descent of Moses and Joshua (who had remained at the lower slope) is so graphically told (xxxii. 15-19) that the teacher only needs to read well to make it vivid. Tell of the difficulty of powdering gold—an art learnt by Moses in Egypt—and of the bitterness of the polluted water. The terrible punishment told of the fearfulness of the sin. Help the children to see that those slain (xxxii. 26, 27), probably those taking part in the idolatrous dance, were a danger to the whole people while they lived.

6. Tell of the second chance—another forty days of waiting (xxxiv. 1-9, 28). But this time, instead of Moses full of anger when he returned to the camp, there was Moses with his face shining from the glory of God. It was as though out of the dark cloud God had sent a bit of His glory to speak forgiveness.

When *we* in our hearts fail to keep His holy will, there is One with a face more shining than that of Moses who speaks forgiveness to us. Who is that? Have we all learnt to repeat those "ten words"? If not shall we do so this week?

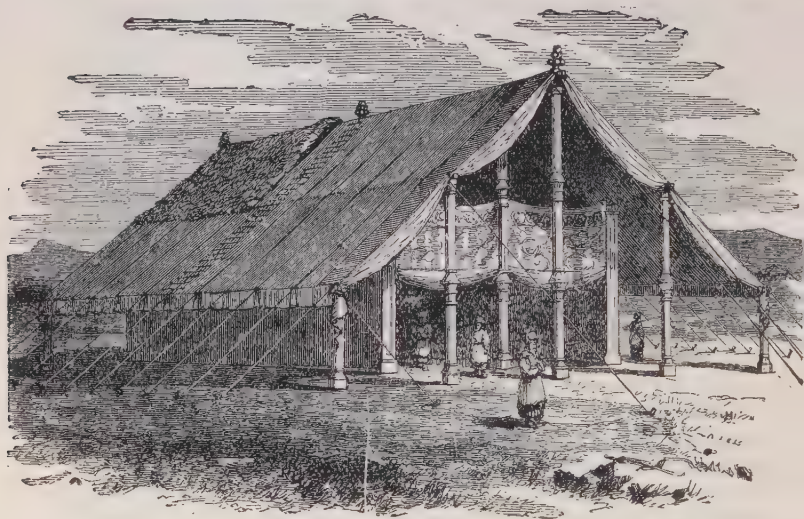
LESSON 44

WORSHIP IN THE WILDERNESS

Exod. xxxv.—xl.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

It will be impossible in the story for the children to include all the material in the lesson passage, but the teacher should be acquainted with the whole of it. Note the following



THE TABERNACLE

analysis of the chapters : Chap. xxxv. tells of the offerings—xxxvi. describes the arrangement and structure of the building—xxxvii. the furniture—xxxviii. the furniture of the court—xxxix. the priests' garments—xl. the erection of the Tabernacle and presence of God. Much of this will be beyond the children but it will give the teacher the material for his own mental pictures, and he should read especially chaps. xxxv, xxxvi, and xl. Make a list of the materials needed for the building and consider where they might be obtained. The gold and the jewels they had brought with them from Egypt, xii. 35, 36. The shittim wood, desert thorn trees, would have to be cut; badgers hunted for their skins; rams' skins from their flocks; goats' hair; flax for the linen probably grew in the watercourses about the foot of the mountain; oil; spices, dye from tree roots and herbs. Consider who would get each of these—men, women and children—and think of all the different kinds of work that had to be done. Consider the time occupied in the building of

the Tabernacle. They reached Sinai three months after leaving Egypt, xix. 1, 2. From there Moses apparently went several times for periods of communion with God on the mountain, twice staying for about six weeks. Thus it must have been another three months at least before the work was begun, and it was finished one year after they left Egypt, xl. 17, leaving six months in which all the work has done. Note how many times in chapter xxxv. the people's willingness is mentioned. See their reason for doing the work, xxix. 43.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage reverent Worship of God.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that when Moses went up into the mountain for communion with God, he told the other people that they must not come further than a certain limit. But God did not want people always to keep away from Him like that—He only wanted to teach them the right way to come into His presence. So when Moses came back again, amongst the laws we heard of last week, was one message that we shall hear about now.

The Message—Picture the people assembled at the foot of the mountain to hear Moses give God's message. Read xxix. 43. What was this place where God would meet with the people? It was a church that He wanted them to build. Read xxv. 2 and explain that these offerings were to be the materials for building the church. If the people would give the church to God then He would no longer tell them to keep away from Him, but He would come into the church to meet them every time they came there to worship Him. Imagine with what awe they listened to this message, and yet how glad they were to think there was a way in which they could come near to God. Then Moses introduced to them Bezaleel, who was appointed to take charge of the work. Read xxxv. 30-35, and see that the children understand what a clever man he was and that all his accomplishments were at God's service. To him the people were to bring their gifts.

The Gifts—Imagine the company dispersing to their tents all discussing the wonderful message and each asking someone else, "What will you give?" Help the children to realize the difficulty of giving anything. Money was no good for there was no bazaar where anything could be bought; and as they were going on a journey they were carrying with them only their household goods. See if the children can remember the jewellery given by the Egyptians—somebody said, "I can give some jewellery." Think how the suggestion was taken up and passed from tent to tent and imagine how everybody discussed it. Let the children talk freely about what they would have done had they been there. Tell how the people brought freely of their jewels—some gave all, some gave part of what they had. Were there some who gave nothing? Picture the stream of people coming with their little parcels to Bezaleel during the next few days. Think of the sorrow of any who had not even a jewel to give.

The Work—But can a church be built of jewellery? What is yours built of? Could these people make a church like that? Remind the children that their work in Egypt had been building, but a church of brick or stone would be no use now—they must have one that could be carried about with them. Moses had got all the plans ready in communion with God, and now Bezaleel told the people they must make a Tent Church. Describe in detail the materials needed and how the people prepared them. Now everybody could help—even those who had had nothing they could give could now have a share in preparing the church. Boards were needed for the walls, to be stood upright and held together by rods slid through rings (xxxvi. 20-33). Curtains of linen and of goats' hair—let the children count the total length and number of each kind—to be hung right over the outside of the church (xxxvi. 8-18). Leather for the roof (xxxvi. 19.) More curtains to be hung all round the church compound (xxxviii. 9-16.) Poles and cords for hanging these, brass sockets for the poles and silver hooks (xxxviii. 17). Special embroidered curtains for the middle of the church (xxxvi. 35), for the door of the church (xxxvi. 37) and for the entrance to the compound (xxxviii. 18). Notice the different colours of the curtains and roof (xxxvi. 8, 19; xxxviii. 18), and think how the

dyes would be prepared. Inside, the church walls were not whitewashed, but covered with gold (xxxvi. 34.) Count up how many different kinds of work had to be done to make this church and help the children to feel something of the eager enthusiasm of those people as they worked. What part did the children do? What questions did they ask their parents about it? Read the message Bezaleel sent to Moses when they had been at work for some time, and what Moses said to the people, xxxvi. 5, 6. How excited they must have been then.

The Church—Now they had only to wait for Bezaleel and his special helpers to fit all these parts together. Imagine their excitement as the day drew near for the church to be ready for worship. Did the children ask "Shall we see God?"—"Will God really come into it?" Then the day came and Moses gave the signal for all to gather for worship. Imagine them pouring out of their tents all laughing and talking—then seeing the church and all becoming silent—*God was there!* How did they know? The beautiful, bright cloud which had been leading them was resting right on the roof of the church (xl. 34, 38). So quietly and reverently they gathered round their church and knelt to worship God. It was not big enough for them all to go inside, only the priests could do that. But even Moses and Aaron could not go in that day—God's glory was so bright that they all knelt outside to worship (xl. 35). Perhaps then they all stood and sang praises to God like we do in church, and after more prayer all went home very joyful because God had accepted their gifts and come into their midst. That is a story for us to think of every time we go to church, so that we shall remember to be quiet and reverent as they were.

LESSON 45

THE TWELVE SCOUTS

Num. xiii. 1, 2, 17-33 ; xiv. 1-10

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Consider the nature of the people with whom Moses had to deal, Exod. xiv. 11 ; xv. 24 ; xvi. 2 ; xvii. 4 ; xxxii. 1 ; Num. xiv. 1-4 ; xvi. 2, 3. Their long residence in Egypt, during both prosperity and adversity, had blunted their religious susceptibilities—in fact, but for the persecution of the last years they might have forgotten all about God's call and promises to their forefathers and have made Egypt their permanent home. There were also amongst them others than Israelites, Ex. 38 ; Lev. xxiv. 10. The task of transforming this undisciplined horde of slaves into a self-respecting nation was immense and the forty years of wandering none too long for its accomplishment. But it evidently became necessary that the older generation of all who had memory of Egypt, should die before the nation could enter upon its new life in the land.

Consider the sending of the spies, xiii. 1-3. " This was a reasonable precaution. They intended to settle in the land and it was unknown to one and all. The next step was a momentous one. They might wander at will amid the great spaces of the wilderness ; but it was certain that every step in Canaan would be contested. The land was in possession of others, and they must fight for their new home. It is here said that the sending of the spies was at the command of the Lord ; and in Deut. i. 22, 23, it is stated to be a suggestion from the people that greatly commended itself to Moses. In fact it was both. Every dictate of wisdom and prudence is a command of the Lord. It was an expedient course to select prominent men, representative of each of the tribes, for they all had equal stake in the future land. It is well in entering upon an undertaking to count the cost and lay our plans accordingly . . . There is no necessary opposition between faith and prudence " (Feasey).

Find on the map the places mentioned. From Sinai the people followed a northerly route to Kadesh-Barnea, xii. 16, on the southern edge of the land itself. Note how easy it would have been to enter Canaan at this point. "The people had welcomed the promised fruitfulness of the land but failed to see that they themselves were to be the instruments of conquest. The root sin was unbelief, without which the power of the living God lacked channels for its exercise . . . Children may have a sense of injustice in one people claiming a land already occupied. But all the world is God's and whenever a people has become corrupted through sin God has scattered them. (The spies found) a land of fruit and luxury, yet of sin" (Huntley). Joshua was already a man of note among them, Ex. xvii. 9-13; xxiv. 13; xxxii. 17.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the children what faith is.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall God's promise to Abraham about Canaan (Gen. xiii. 17). How much of the land did Abraham himself see? How much did he own? And we have seen how for very many years his descendants had lived right away in Egypt, but had now started back again to Canaan. Where did we leave them in last week's lesson? They stayed there not quite two months more after building the Church, and then the cloud led them northward right to the very edge of Canaan.

Sent to See the Land—Imagine the excitement amongst the people as they neared the land of promise. Already they were in much better country than the desert they had travelled through—think how they would talk of the new country and all the good things they had heard about it. Then picture a few of the people talking to Moses—tell what they said (Deut. i. 22). Why did they suggest this? Explain that there were cities and many people living there and perhaps they would have to fight. Then picture the twelve spies being selected—one from amongst the descendants of

each of Jacob's sons. Read Moses' instructions to them (xiii. 17-20.)

Seeing the Land—Describe the band of men leaving behind the big camp—setting out northwards—coming to better and better country. Tell how they approached Hebron (xiii. 22). Do the children remember who used to live near there? Not far from Hebron was the brook Eshcol—vividly describe the fruit gardens they found in that neighbourhood (xiii. 23, 24). That apparently decided them that the land was as good and fertile as they had supposed, so with their load of fruit they started back again to their camp. For forty days they had been gone (xiii. 25). Picture their arrival and think how the people would exclaim at the quantity of beautiful fruit.

Reporting about the Land—Describe the great meeting of all the people which Moses called to hear the report of the twelve men (xiii. 26). Read their report, xiii. 27-29, and imagine the fear and disappointment of the people as they heard this and began to say, "Then we can never conquer the land!" Then picture Caleb coming forward, calling for silence, speaking. Tell what he said (xiii. 30). Why was he so sure they could take the land? Show that he remembered God's promise so was sure God would help them now as He had helped in other difficulties. With him stood one more of the twelve men, agreeing with all he said, Joshua. But the other ten at once shouted out again that it was no good trying to go further (xiii. 31). Would the men with faith win or would the others succeed in persuading the people? Picture the scene of confusion in the camp (xiv. 1), and read what the people said to Moses (xiv. 2-4).

Failure—Describe vividly the action of Moses and Aaron (xiv. 5), and of Caleb and Joshua (xiv. 6). Read the stirring words the two young men said to the people to try and strengthen their faith in God, xiv. 7-9. Tell sadly of the People's response (xiv. 10). Tell of God's sorrow over the decision of the people and Moses, intercession for them (xiv. 11-19). Tell God's final judgement on them (xiv. 20-24)—this was the tenth time that they had shown lack of faith and yet every time God had helped them out of the difficulty, so it was evident these older people would not learn to trust

Him. But He would not destroy them at once—He would wait till they died naturally—but not till all those who were grown up when they left Egypt were dead could the people be allowed to enter the land. Tell of the exception in the case of the two men of faith (xiv. 30). What a different history the people might have had if they had only trusted God—which of the people are we like—those who trusted or those who did not?

LESSON 46

ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE LAND

Deut. xxxi. 1-15 ; xxxii. 44-52 ; xxxiv.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ The story of the thirty-eight years of wandering told in a few chapters is one of the saddest and most significant in all history. There was rebellion against the authority of the leaders who could not lead against the word of the Lord, and the slow fulfilment of the terrible sentence pronounced on all that generation. Possibly, while maintaining in general outline the arrangement of the camp, many sections scattered far away and may have cultivated the more fertile desert patches. Yet the mysterious manna gift continued, and from time to time the Divine Presence was manifested in sign that the purpose must yet be fulfilled. How at last an organised movement began again we are not told. Maybe when the last graves were dug, and only Miriam, Aaron and Moses remained of that generation, the cloud led once more to the place of failure and new beginning ” (Huntley).

The teacher should also read Deut. ii ; and see Num. xxxiii. for a summary of these wanderings. Consider the chief events after the return of the spies :—

Defeat by Amalekites, Num. xiv. 40-45.

Rebellion of Korah, Num. xvi.

Death of Miriam, Num. xx. 1.



THE WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES

Moses forbidden to enter the land, Num. xx. 2-12.

Death of Aaron, Num. xx. 23-29.

Brazen Serpent, Num. xxi. 4-9.

Balak and Balaam, Num. xxii, xxiii, xxiv.

Joshua's Commission, Deut. xxxi. 7, 8, 23.

Moses' last words, Deut. xxxii, xxxiii.

Moses' death, Deut. xxxiv.

Trace the route on the map and note who were the different peoples they met on the way. "The refusal of the Edomites to allow Israel to cross their territory involved doubling back on their tracks to the Gulf of Akaba, and up the eastern side

of Mount Seir towards Moab, conquering the Ammonites, and Og king of Bashan, until the borders of Moab were reached. Here Balak tried to stay their advance by the weapon of superstition, but failed, and Israel continued to Mount Nebo, the threshold of the eastern gate into Canaan " (Hayes).

Today's lesson deals with a new generation and brings out the fact of one generation having to be involved in tasks their fathers ought to have done. "What we fail to do as well as what we do, affects posterity." Carefully consider the reason why Moses was excluded from the land. His fault was rendered more serious by his influential position. Although in early life he had sometimes failed through losing his temper, yet he became known as the meekest of men, Num. xii. 3; but here again we see his old fiery temper re-asserting itself. He not only struck the rock when he had been told to speak, but by saying "we" took to himself some of God's prerogative.

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to appreciate the fine qualities of Moses' character.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How many years did God say the Israelites were to wander in the wilderness before going into Canaan? Why? Many things happened during those years and we shall hear of a few today.

Miriam—It was near the end of the time, and many of the older people had died, and the children were growing up, when an old, old woman, named Miriam died—do the children remember who she was? Who were her brothers? How sad they must have been.

Aaron—Who was the older of the two brothers? It was his turn next to go. Tell what God said to Moses (Num. xx. 24), and then picture the three men leaving the great camp and going up into the mountain (xx. 25-27). Describe what happened on the mountain (xx. 28), and how the people mourned when Moses and his nephew returned alone (xx. 29).

Joshua—How lonely Moses must have felt now as he continued to lead the people on. Read his prayer and God's answer, Num. xxvii. 16-20. Let the children recall what Joshua had done and why he had not died like the rest. Vividly picture his appointment as Moses' helper before the new priest, Eleazar, and all the people (Num. xxvii. 22, 23). Let the children tell what qualities Joshua had exhibited that made him fit for this responsibility—bravery, faith in God, obedience.

Moses—At last the people came to a place where there was a high mountain, and from this mountain they could look across a river near by right into their promised land, and it looked a beautiful country. As Moses saw it thus he began to want more than ever to lead the people right into it. Tell with feeling how he prayed that God would let him go in, and what God replied (Deut. iii. 23-27), and picture the old man looking longingly over the river from the mountain. Very briefly tell why God did not let Moses go in (Num. xx. 2-12). And Moses knew that what God said was right and that sin always brings suffering. So he prepared to leave the people. Imagine some of the final scenes as the addresses contained in the book of Deuteronomy were delivered to the people. Especially describe the scene when, before all the people, he gave Joshua his final charge and handed to the Levites the Book of the Law which he had so carefully prepared (xxxi. 7-9). Read his command to the Levites about the Book, xxxi. 10, 11, and his last words to the people, xxxii. 46, 47. And then once again he walked slowly up the mountain and looked over into the beautiful land. And there alone on the mountain, Moses died, and God Himself buried the old man's body. Read solemnly in closing, xxxiv. 5-8. Point out the great honour he received both from God and the people, and ever since his name has been revered by many thousands of people. By giving up his greatness as a Prince in Egypt he became greater, by God's grace, than he ever could have been by staying in Egypt.

LESSON 47

JOSHUA THE COURAGEOUS CAPTAIN

Joshua i. 1-9; iii. 1-iv. 11

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The teacher should read carefully the whole of Josh. i, iii, iv. See on the map the position of the Israelite camp extending fully three miles along the plain opposite Jericho, on the east of Jordan, and Gilgal their first camp in the land. See also the point at which they crossed the river, and the city Adam, thirty miles to the north at which place the stream was blocked. This is not the only case in history where the river has been stopped at that point—a piece of the bank falling into the narrow bed has been known to bay back the water for many hours till the stream could wear away the obstruction. Such a circumstance God provided at the very moment when Israel was ready to cross. Consider Joshua's previous history—we see him as a successful soldier, a trusted attendant and a fearless spy.

See the order of the march, iii. 3, 4, 8, 17, noting the distance of nearly two miles between ark and people. Note the particulars of the two memorials that were erected in the river and at Gilgal, and the reason for them, iv. 1-24. See how many people there were, iv. 13, and consider how many hours they would take to walk over.

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the children's admiration for Joshua's courage.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Before Moses died whom did he appoint as his successor? What had Joshua done before then that showed him to be suitable for that great task? (Especially get the children to tell of his attitude over spying the land.)

Joshua and God—So after Moses died the people looked to

Joshua to lead them. How did Joshua feel about it? Imagine his loneliness without Moses, and his diffidence over such a great work. Picture him going away alone to pray to God about it and read part of what God said to him, i. 2, 3, 6-9. That was enough for him—with that wonderful promise he felt ready for anything.

Joshua and the People—Picture Joshua now returning to the people and calling to him their officers and leading men. Tell very impressively what he said to them (i. 11), and describe them taking this message each to his own tribe or division. Imagine the thrill that went through the camp at the words "in three days ye shall go in!" For forty years they had talked of this great event and now they were to go in! Picture vividly the work of the next three days—washing their clothes, pulling down tents, packing up bundles—hurry, bustle, excitement everywhere. Meanwhile Joshua was making his preparations. Like Moses had done before, so he now sent spies to see how much trouble they would have in taking possession of the land. (Do not attempt to give the details of their experiences in the land, but picture Joshua awaiting their return, and their arrival on the third day.) Read ii. 24—there were still big cities and giants there but the inhabitants had heard some of the wonderful things God had done for His people so were afraid of them. Then Joshua knew he could conquer them.

Marching to the River—Picture the early morning start—the short march to the river Jordan—the officers again taking Joshua's messages to the people—the night spent on the river bank (iii. 1, 2). But how were they to get any further? The river was just in front of them and there was no way over! Now Joshua called all the people together and told them what to do. Read his orders, iii. 9-13. So the people were to see another miracle! Imagine their excitement as they prepared to go on.

Crossing the River—Now picture vividly the crossing—the priests carrying the Ark, a precious box which was always kept in their tent-church when they were camping—all the people watching them till they reached the river and put their feet in the water—the water getting lower and lower till there was not even a trickle left—then all the people starting and

walking right across the river on dry land while the priests still stood in the middle of the river bed (iii. 14-17). It took a long time for them all to get over but at last they were actually in the land they had so often talked about!

Building Memorials—Describe how Joshua built a little tower just where the priests had stood in the middle of the river (iv. 9), and then twelve men each carried away a big stone from the river bed. Then Joshua turned and called the priests to come (iv. 17), and as soon as ever they reached the other side the water began to trickle down again, faster and faster till the river was full once more (iv. 18)! Tell what was done with the twelve stones (iv. 19, 20), and read Joshua's declaration, iv. 21-24. We cannot go and see that pile of stones to-day, but we can know just as surely as they did that "the hand of the Lord is mighty" and we too can fear and trust Him.

LESSON 48

THE CALL OF GIDEON

Judges vi. 11-32.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Consider the whole period of the Book of Judges. "When Israel followed Joshua across the Jordan she was a collection of tribes; when Samuel handed over his authority to Saul, she was a nation. During those wild years were being forged the bonds of a nationality which has survived unprecedented shocks till the present day. Not even at the time of Saul was the nation complete; Judah is curiously isolated from his brethren and in the song of Deborah is never mentioned. Ephraim is regarded as the leading tribe, though his part was by no means the most glorious. But these repeated shocks of invasion did what nothing else could have done, consciousness of a common foe gave Israel the consciousness of a common aim, destiny and religion" (Dummelow).

The Amalekites were their hereditary foes, Num. xiv. 45, and the Midianites were another of the wandering desert tribes, descendants of Abraham, Gen. xxv. 1, 2. The Israelites apparently did little fighting but ran away at the approach of the marauders, vi. 2. Consider the unnamed prophet and his work, vi. 7-10. Collect details regarding Gideon and his family, vi. 15 ; viii. 18-20. Note the suggestion regarding his personal appearance. Though he was the youngest son yet he had a son old enough to be fighting with him. He first appears before us in deep sorrow and bitterness over his country's woes and his own personal bereavement. Find references to his fears—he was evidently timid by nature but never do we find him giving in to his fears when convinced of God's will—herein lies true bravery. Study the three times in this chapter when God spoke to him, vi. 11, 23, 25—was the last of these in a dream? God could not use him to deliver his people till he himself was clear of the national sin. He was evidently known as one who did not worship the idol, see vi. 29, and could count upon ten others who would be willing to destroy it with him, vi. 27. Joash was not a believer in Baal, vi. 31. Note his sarcasm in speaking to his fellow-townsmen. Between vi. 26 and 27 at least one whole day must have passed to enable Gideon to make his preparations. Find on the map Ophrah, the family home near Shechem, and Tabor where Gideon's brothers had been killed.

Aim of this Lesson

To indicate some of the characteristics of a man whom God can call to His service.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Discuss famine and its causes—(a) lack of rain, (b) incursions of enemies. It was this second reason which caused the Israelites to have famine in their land once. It was a good many years after Joshua had led them into their promised land—it was many years after he had died as an old man of nearly 110—and the people had begun to forget God and to worship idols, so God allowed trouble to

come to them. Describe how bands of wandering robbers would make raids into the land stealing the crops and cattle while the frightened Israelites ran away to hide in the caves in the mountains.

Gideon and His Visitor—Now it happened that one man had managed to save some of his corn and had found a sheltered place in which to thresh it. Describe the place hidden by a large spreading tree, a wine press which was something like an oil press (vi. 11), and a large flat-topped rock (vi. 20). Now describe Gideon: tell his name and what he looked like (viii. 18). He would be about forty years of age and was looking very sad—give the two reasons for this (vi. 13; viii. 19). Imagine how carefully he would hide his corn as he threshed it and how he would often look round about to see if any enemies were coming. Think how surprised and afraid he was when he suddenly saw a man sitting under his big oak tree. (Be careful not to speak of the visitor as an angel till the point where Gideon himself realized that he had seen a supernatural being—he appeared just like an ordinary man.) Tell the visitor's salutation (vi. 12). Read the conversation that followed, vi. 13-18, helping the children to feel Gideon's bitterness of spirit, and his amazement at what he was told to do. Desiring to hear more about this wonderful call he asked his visitor to stay longer—describe in detail how he prepared a meal and what happened to it (vi. 19-21). Picture Gideon's fear and tell what he said (vi. 22). Tell how his fears were allayed and how he worshipped God (vi. 23, 24). What did he think about for the rest of that day? Did he thresh any more wheat?

Gideon's Dream—Imagine how restless he would be that night with his mind still full of what the angel had said. Picture him at last falling asleep and dreaming. Very slowly read vi. 25, 26. Think how he would then start awake again and perhaps for all the rest of that night lie awake making his plans. Suggest what his thoughts were—this thing must be done at night or the people would stop him—there was too much for one man to do, who would help him? One after another he thought of his friends and acquaintances till he had decided on ten men whom he could ask to help.

Gideon's Preparations—Describe his preparations during the next day—looking at the altar to see just how much work there would be—visiting each of his ten men in turn—saying to each, “I want your help to-night; keep it a secret; meet me at such a place, at such a time, and bring an axe or some other implement.” Think of all the tools he would need. Did he do any other work that day?

Gideon's Great Deed—Picture the eleven men meeting after dark—Gideon telling his dream in a whisper—all going to the altar. Describe in detail how they broke it (a careful study of any village shrine near your home will help you to describe this well). Tell how they then sacrificed to God. Then all quickly went back home before daylight.

In the Morning—Very vividly picture what happened when the Ophrah people discovered what had been done. “Who has brought all this trouble on us?”—“Think what awful calamities will fall upon us, now.” Some one said, “Perhaps Gideon has done it—he never worshipped the idol.” Picture the angry crowd going to his house and Joash coming out to meet them. Read what he said, vi. 31, helping the children to understand that he was laughing at them. Describe how they all felt ashamed and went quietly back home. Let the children suggest adjectives which describe Gideon's character.

LESSON 49

GIDEON'S VICTORY

Judges vii

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

A careful geographical study is necessary for the right understanding of this story. The hill of Moreh rises out of the valley of Jezreel between Tabor and Gilboa. The well Harod was slightly nearer the foot of Gilboa. From there to the Jordan is about 10 miles down the valley and it was this

way that the Midianites escaped to the fords of the river. The places in vii. 22 are all rather obscure but were probably in the Jordan valley. Note that it was the men of the northern tribes, as well as his own tribe of Manasseh, that followed Gideon, vi. 35. The men sent back by Gideon before the night attack were probably those who joined in the pursuit that followed, vii. 23, while the Ephraimites held the fords, vii. 24. See how the position of their territory made it easy for them to do so. The account in vi. 33-40 belongs to this story and must be included. Consider the indications of Gideon's natural timidity in his asking for signs, and taking his servant with him to the enemy camp. But God granted the signs and did not upbraid him with lack of faith. Until his fears were overcome he was unable to lead the army. The drastic reduction of the army must have been a severe test for him, but men who were afraid would have been no strength to him. The method of drinking was probably a purely arbitrary test and did not indicate any special fitness on the part of the 300. How long a time elapsed since Gideon's call it is impossible to say, but long enough for his fame to have spread widely, vii. 14, and for him to have instilled some amount of courage into his own people, compare vi. 2 and 35. Note that Gideon's son was not amongst those who were too frightened to go to battle though he hesitated to kill men in cold blood, viii. 20. Carefully study Gideon's strategy and his disposition of his troops. Note that it was the Midianite's dream that suggested to him his battle cry. See the indications of his piety in vi. 36 and vii. 15. vi. 34 might be rendered "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon"—here we have the secret of how so timid a man could become so courageous.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the source of true bravery.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall Gideon's brave deed of last week's lesson. But it was something else that the angel had told him to do—what was it? So now he set to work to obey this command also.

Gathering an Army—Confident of God's presence he began to collect an army. Picture him making his proclamation to his own family, and his relatives at once gathering round him (vi. 34). Then tell of the messengers sent all through that district and away to the north, and of the response made to the summons (vi. 35). 32,000 men came to him—what would Gideon feel like when he saw such a large army?

Asking for Signs—Instead of feeling either proud or confident of success Gideon was overcome by fear. Recall what he had said to the angel (vi. 15) and picture him now going away alone to pray. Read vi. 36, 37, and vividly describe the answer to the prayer. Read vi. 39 and describe the second sign. That satisfied him and he led his big army away towards the place where the enemy's army was camped.

Reducing the Army—Describe the position of the two armies lying very near to each other between two hills (vii. 1). Read vii. 2 and see that the children appreciate the meaning—probably Gideon's men were talking very boastfully about what they were going to do—he heard some of them saying, "Look at us! We are a big enough army to conquer those people! Just see how we are going to drive them away!" And Gideon knew in his heart that this sort of talk would never do—they might be a big army of brave men but without God's help they would never win their battle, and none of the men seemed to be thinking about God. Picture Gideon going away to pray, then tell the fresh proclamation he made to his army (vii. 3), and picture the fearful ones gradually slinking away. As soon as some began to go others began to feel afraid and more went—100, 200, 1,000, 1,200—all going, going—till only 10,000 of the 32,000 were left! Imagine Gideon's chagrin and disappointment that so many should be afraid, and his own fear as he saw his army dwindling. Again picture him praying and tell how again God made him feel that his army was too big—still they would say they themselves had won the victory (vii. 4). Picture the scene at the water (vii. 5-7), telling how God made Gideon feel in his heart which were the men to keep. Poor Gideon, only 300 men left—but then there was

God's promise. Picture the rejected men returning to their tents.

Hearing a Dream—Gideon was trying not to be afraid but God could see fear in his heart, so He told him now to do something else. Tell what God said (vii. 9-11). Evidently Gideon was afraid to go alone for he took his servant with him and they started off together. Picture vividly how in the darkness they crawled away from their camp and over towards the enemy. No wonder Gideon was afraid, for it was a very dangerous thing to do—help the children to realize the danger. Tell what they saw in the dim light (vii. 12), and how they lay down close to a tent where some men were talking. Read what they heard, vii. 13, 14—see that the children fully understand what this meant to Gideon. Picture Gideon worshipping God—hurrying back to his 300 men—in great excitement rousing them up—giving his orders (vii. 15).

Defeating the Enemy—Describe carefully how Gideon arranged his men and the orders he gave, telling their new battle cry (vii. 16-18). Picture them silently marching away in the darkness to their allotted posts. When Gideon had given enough time for all to get ready he gave the signal. Tell what this was and vividly describe what happened then (vii. 19, 20). Tell how the Midianites, suddenly waked by the noise, saw themselves completely surrounded by a ring of lights. Imagine what they thought and describe the scene of confusion that followed (vii. 21, 22). Away towards the river they ran hoping to get over to safety. But now all the rest of Gideon's army started after them. Some did get over the river before they were caught, but many were killed or taken prisoners as they ran; and then Gideon led his men across the river and they caught many of those who had escaped to that side. So through God's help Gideon accomplished a most wonderful feat. And surely he never again forgot that when God was with him there was nothing to be afraid of at all.

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Aim

To help the children to appreciate the meaning of Christmas by selected incidents leading up to the great event.

LESSON 50

THE PROMISED HERALD

Luke i. 5-23

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The rise of Christianity was preceded by a long period of four hundred years, during which prophecy was silent, and the religious guidance of the nation passed to the rabbis and the scribes, who made void the Law of God by their traditions. The advent of Christ was heralded by a great revival of prophecy, and by the restoration of direct communications from God to man through supernatural agency, as in the cases of Zacharias, Joseph, Mary, Elizebeth, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds, the Magi, and in particular, John the Baptist, who though he left no written prophecies, and worked no miracle, was declared by our Lord to be the greatest of the prophets, yea, and more than a prophet . . . John was a Nazirite, that is, one of a class of men in Israel who consecrated themselves to God by abstaining from all intoxicants, by avoiding with scrupulous care all ceremonial defilement, and by wearing the hair long, Num. vi. 1-21. Usually men made the Nazirite vow for a definite time, not less than thirty days, but John, like Samson, Samuel and the Rechabites in the Old Testament, was a Nazirite for life. There are some examples of the Nazirite vow even among Christians,

Acts xviii. 18 ; xxi. 26 . . . John, the Nazirite and dweller in the wilderness (probably as a celibate), represents the austere and ascetic type of piety which few can imitate. . . .

“David divided the priests into twenty-four ‘courses’ or groups, each of which in rotation was responsible for the Temple services for a week. Each course, therefore, officiated twice a year, at an interval of six months. The course of Abijah was the eighth. After the Captivity only four courses returned, but these were subdivided into twenty-four courses under the old names. The course of Abijah is said to have officiated in April and October. . . . The people were afraid that the officiating priest might be struck dead for omitting some formality, Lev. xvi. 13, hence the custom was for the priest to finish his ministry as quickly as possible. Once when Simon the Just delayed too long, the people became so anxious that they almost broke into the Holy Place. Afterwards they reproached him for his want of consideration for them. . . .

“Zacharias’ prayer was probably not for offspring, but for the coming of the kingdom of God, and of the Messianic salvation, the only suitable prayer for so solemn an occasion. It was a maxim of the rabbis that a ‘prayer in which there is no mention of the kingdom of God is no prayer at all.’ . . . With the unbelief of Zacharias compare the laughter of Abraham and of Sarah, Gen. xvii. 17, xviii. 12. To ask for a sign was not in itself wrong. Abraham, Gideon and Hezekiah had done so without rebuke. But the appearance of the angel ought itself to have been a sufficient sign to Zacharias. . . .

“St. Luke gives special prominence to the ministry of angels, see i. 26 ; ii. 9, 13, 21 ; xii. 8 ; xv. 10 ; xvi. 22 ; xxii. 43 ; xxiv. 4, 23, and often in Acts ” (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To focus the children’s attention on Someone promised and looked for.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the promise to Abram (Gen. xv. 7). We have heard how this promise was fulfilled—how Moses

and Joshua led the people out of Egypt and into Canaan—and how Gideon helped to establish them there. But that was not all the promise—read Gen. xxii. 18. Somebody amongst Abram's descendants was to be a blessing to all the world. And for many hundreds of years after the time of Abram people thought and talked of that great promise and wondered how it would be fulfilled. Then at the very end of the Old Testament we read something else about His coming—read Mal. iii. 1—a messenger, a herald, must first be expected. And at the beginning of the New Testament we find everybody thinking much about this.

The Old Priest—There was then living near Jerusalem an old priest named Zacharias with his wife Elizabeth, who had never had any children. This was a great sorrow to them. Tell of the arrangement whereby the priests took it in turns twice a year to go to Jerusalem for a week to do various services in the Temple, and Zacharias took his turn at this amongst the others. Imagine what a great event this was in the quiet lives of the old couple living in their country village.

An Angel—It was once during Zacharias's week in the Temple that he had a very strange experience. Leaving the great crowd of worshippers bowed in prayer in the Temple court, he went inside to the altar to burn incense (i. 9, 10). Vividly describe what he saw (i. 11, 12), and read what the angel said, i. 13-17. This was not yet the promised Messiah, but the messenger or herald that the prophet had written about—the one who was to prepare for the coming of the One promised to Abram. Briefly tell of Zacharias's hesitation and unbelief and of the punishment the angel told him would come (i. 18-20). Vividly picture his reappearance before the crowd of worshippers and imagine their astonishment when they found he was dumb as the angel had said (i. 22)! Think how glad he must have been to get back home again when his work in Jerusalem was finished, and how surprised his wife must have been to find he could not speak.

The Old Man's Son—By and by the baby was born and the two old people were delighted at last to have a son. Describe in detail the scene at the naming of the baby (i. 59-64). How glad Zacharias must have been to be able to

talk again! No wonder the neighbours said, "Whatever sort of a boy is this going to be?" And he did grow up different from other people. Maybe, as they were old, his parents died while he was still young, so he had no home to live in. And that may have been one reason why he chose the life of a hermit, living all alone out in a wild desolate place. He ate just the things he could find in the jungle and dressed in the coarsest clothing (Mark i. 6). Refer again to the angel's words, "He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink," and describe the Nazirite vow which his parents took for him. We do not know how he spent all his time during the years that he lived in this way, but he certainly studied the Jewish Scriptures, that is our Old Testament, and knew all about the promised One Who was coming. And he knew that he himself was the one to prepare the way for the Coming One, and the first way in which he could do this was by living a good and pure life himself so that he would be ready for any work God might call him to.

LESSON 51

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Luke i. 26-40

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Consider the Messianic Hope of the Jews—the promise to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 15-18, and Moses' testimony, Deut. xviii. 15. The tribe out of which the Coming One was to appear had already been foretold, Gen. xlix. 10. A thousand years later, Isaiah and Micah gave most particular details about Him. He was to be from the family of David, Isa. xi. 1; He should be born of a virgin and the name Immanuel indicated that He was to be divine, Isa. vii. 14. 700 years before the event the place of His birth was given as Bethlehem, Mic. v. 2, where again His eternal nature is spoken of. Then besides these particular details the most glorious promises centred round His person. He should be a righteous Judge, Isa. xi. 3-5, and earth should know a new

experience of heavenly bliss under His reign. Isa. xi. 6-10. Further splendid predictions are found in Isa. xxv. 6-9; xxxii. 1, 2. And yet there were prophecies that pictured Him as One that should suffer terribly, Isa. liii. 1-10. The complete picture of the Messiah gleaned by pious Jews from these and many more passages contained contradictory elements, but for the most part the people chose to emphasize those that referred to material glory and to their dominance over other nations. At the period of our lesson this week the conception of the Messiah held by the majority of the nation was purely materialistic. But there was just a small number among them that kept alive the pure and noble conception given by their great national prophets.

"Wonder and awe and adoring praise are the emotions with which Christians have ever regarded the unspeakable condescension of Him Who 'when He took upon Him human nature to deliver it, did not abhor the Virgin's womb.' That Mary fully understood Who her child was to be, cannot be supposed. The thought of such a condescension of the Author of nature as is implied in the words of the Creed 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary' is overwhelming even to us; to Mary it would have been so appalling that she could not possibly have performed the duties of a mother. Hence the angel was only permitted to reveal to her that her son would be the Messiah, and 'the Son of God' in some specially exalted yet human sense. The whole narrative moves within the circle of Jewish Old Testament ideas, and this is a proof of its truth, for an invented story would certainly show marks of a Christian origin . . . There is inward fitness that He Who for our sake emptied Himself of His glory, should be born in a stable and laid in a manger, but assuredly it would never have occurred to anyone, Jew or Christian, to invent such a story" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to feel the wonder of the Incarnation.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the names of the old priest and his wife that we heard of last week, and the fact that they were

expecting Someone to come—Someone of whom their son was to be the herald. The Messiah was the title given to Him by the Jews.

Simeon and Anna—Now there was living in Jerusalem an old, old man named Simeon, who was very regular in his attendance at the Temple services, and who must have been there that day when Zacharias had his vision. No doubt he, like the rest, had wondered what it all meant. He was just as diligent in his study of the Scriptures as he was in his attendance at the Temple, and as he read and prayed about these things, God let him understand that he would live to see this promised Messiah (ii. 26). Think how interested he would be in little boys, asking what family they belonged to and wondering if any of them could be the Messiah. And at the same time there was an old woman named Anna, who was just as interested as Simeon in these prophecies. Tell about her (ii. 37), and think how she and Simeon would often meet in Temple and talk about their hopes.

Mary and the Angel—Another person who was expecting and talking about the Messiah was Mary, the young cousin of Elizabeth. She lived far away from Jerusalem, right in the north of the land in a village called Nazareth. One day a stranger came to see her and he brought a wonderful message. Read this, i. 28, 30-38. Note that it says he was an angel—did Mary know this do you think? Perhaps not at first, but she soon knew for no one else could have brought such a message. Of course when we hear the name Jesus we know just Who her Baby was to be, but Mary did not know, only when she heard about the throne of David she at once thought of the expected Messiah—she was to be the mother of the Messiah! Imagine her feeling of awe and wonder and joy.

Reading the Prophets—Think how eager she would be now to know all that had been prophesied about the Messiah. She must have read the Old Testament before, perhaps many times, but now it must be read again and searched for anything about the Coming One. Tell the children a few of the things she would find out about the Messiah from the Scriptures. Read Micah v. 2—it was even told where He was to be born. But how could that be, for Mary lived in Nazareth and Bethlehem was hundred miles away?

Visiting Elizabeth—Mary had no doubt heard about the wonderful thing that had happened to Zacharias, her cousin's husband, so now she determined to go and see Elizabeth. Think how they talked over everything together—each one was to be the mother of a wonderful baby, for Elizabeth's baby was not yet born when Mary came. Together they searched the Scriptures again, and together they prayed to God that they might be worthy of the great honour that He was showing them.

LESSON 52

THE HERALD AT WORK

Luke iii. 1-18

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“The public appearance of the Baptist marked a new era. He came forward in the twofold capacity of a prophet and the forerunner of the Messiah. As prophecy had been silent for four hundred years, and all patriotic Jews were longing for the coming of the Messiah to deliver them from the Roman yoke, it is not surprising that he was welcomed with enthusiasm and that those who ventured to doubt his mission found it expedient to dissemble, Matt. xxi. 26. He might undoubtedly have claimed the allegiance of Israel as their promised king, Luke iii. 15, but true to his mission he declared himself only the forerunner of that greater One, whose ministry was about to begin. The testimony of John to the Messiahship of Jesus is undoubtedly a historical fact, and an important one. To it our Lord owed His first and most capable followers, John i. 35f., and much of His early success.

“The teaching of John was confined within the limits of Old Testament ideas, and his aim was to make his converts pious Jews of the orthodox type. At the same time, his views were of a far more spiritual kind than those generally current. In his teaching he laid the main stress not upon the ceremonial law, but upon righteousness. He did not regard

the Messiah's kingdom as—in its main aspects, at any rate—a temporal monarchy. It was a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom of righteousness. Not a descent from Abraham, but righteousness entitled a man to be a member of it. Hence above all things repentance and amendment of life were necessary. Those who repented and received the Messiah, would be admitted into the kingdom, to whatever nation they might belong, but Israelites who refused to repent and believe would be rejected. John foresaw the difficulties with which Jesus would have to contend, and even predicted for Him a death like his own, John i. 29. In his preaching John appealed largely to the emotion of fear. He declared that the Messianic age would be ushered in by a terrible act of judgment. The Messiah would hew down every unfruitful tree with the axe of retribution. With the fan of judgment he would winnow the wheat, casting the useless chaff into unquenchable fire. Let hypocrites, especially Pharisees and Sadducees, beware, for only by true repentance could they flee from the wrath to come. Let all men practise charity, sharing their goods with their neighbours. Let publicans collect no more than the taxes due. Let soldiers avoid all violence and be content with their wages. So, and so only, could they enter into the kingdom" (Dummelow).

"Study the deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem. They had no doubt that in some way John was connected with the Divine plan for the nation, but could not identify him as *The Voice*. What did *baptism* signify to them? They expected that every Jew by right of natural descent would be a subject of Messiah; they stumbled at the spiritual and moral selection implied in the rite. It is important to study the three passages where John indicates that his baptism is only the symbol of that greater baptism which the true king shall give to His followers" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show John's loyalty to the One who was to come.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the name of the old priest's son, and the fact and nature of the Nazirite vow.

Preaching by the River—It was when he was about thirty years of age that John felt he must now leave his solitude and go with God's messages to the men of his nation to prepare the way for the Messiah. But he did not go to the big cities where most of the people were; he went to the valley of the river Jordan where no people lived. Then how could he give God's messages if no people were there. Perhaps the children can suggest that he would meet companies travelling and crossing the river by one or other of the fords. Think how surprised these people must have been to suddenly meet this wild-looking man who told them to forsake their sins. And very soon some of these travellers carried news of him to the cities where they were going and the city people became interested and some of them went out to see the strange preacher. Picture him as he received them—first they came in twos and threes and then in bigger companies.

"*What shall we do?*"—Tell of the different kinds of people who came to him for advice, and read what he said to each—all kinds of people, iii. 11—to the publicans, iii. 13—to the soldiers, iii. 14. Describe the ceremony he performed for any who wished to signify that they would leave their sins. And soon everyone was talking about him all over the country. Never had they heard any preacher say such stern things—never had they been so stirred as by the preaching of this man. And of course everybody began to talk about the Messiah and wonder whether this could be He.

"*Who art Thou?*"—Up in the big city of Jerusalem the religious teachers talked much about him—"Can he be our Messiah?" they asked, and some answered "yes" and some answered "no." So they decided to find out from the strange man himself and selected a few to go and interview him (John i. 19-24). Picture their arrival and the scene they found by the river—perhaps they listened to his preaching for awhile but that did not answer their questions, so they had at last to ask him straight out what they wanted to know. "Who art thou?" "I am not the Messiah," he replied, for he knew that was really what they meant. Tell their other questions and his answers (John i. 21-23). Read iii. 16, 17. Then he had some connexion with the Messiah, and was urging them to put away their sins in order to be ready for

the One of Whom he was only the herald. And many of them responded to his call and determined to live better lives and so be ready for their Messiah. And all over the nation expectation rose higher and higher—the Messiah must very soon be coming they felt.

We, too, as we think of Christmas, and know that that is the time when we celebrate the coming of the Messiah, want to do as those people did—seek to put away our sins and live better lives more worthy of our King.

the One of Whom he speaks the legend. And many of them
 responded to his call and determined to live better lives
 so to reach the first step. And all give the same
 explanation two things and higher—the first and most
 common is a strong love of life.

Yet, then, as we think of Christmas, and know that that is
 the time when we celebrate the coming of the Messiah, we
 have no doubt people who—yet to our way our souls and
 better lives more worthy of our King.

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